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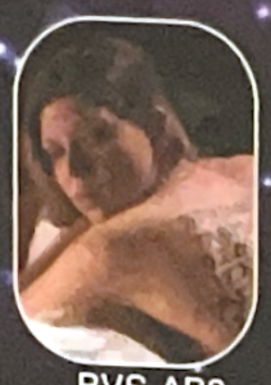
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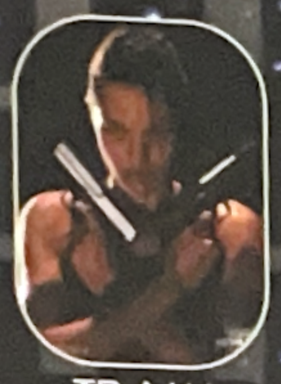
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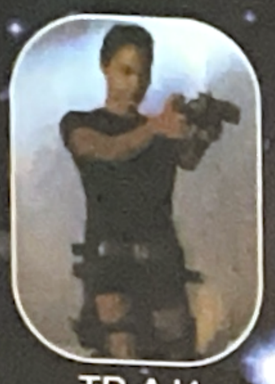
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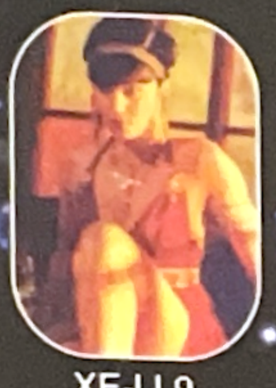
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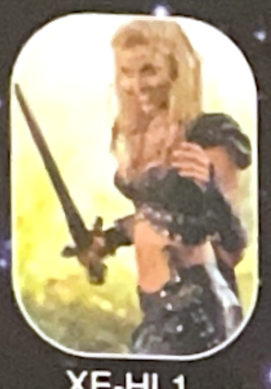
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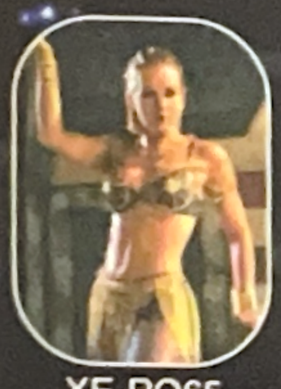
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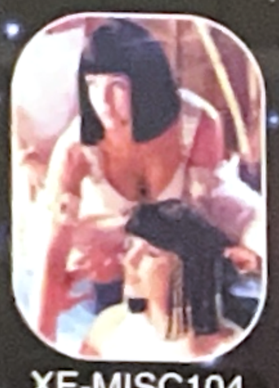
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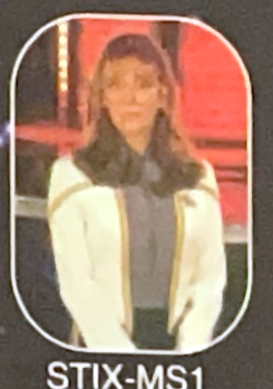
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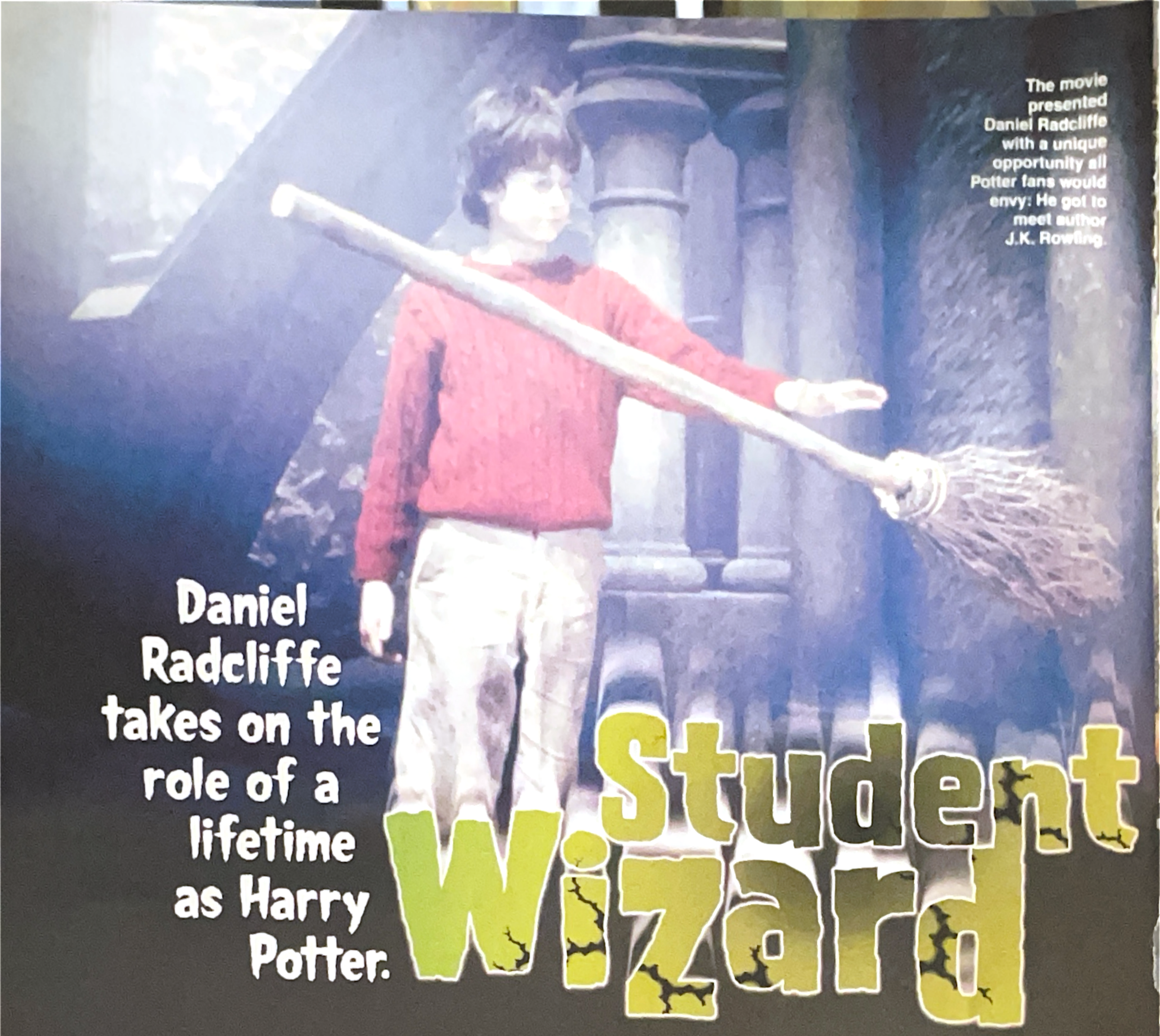


The movie presented Daniel Radcliffe with a unique opportunity all Potter fans would envy: He got to meet author J.K. Rowling.

Daniel Radcliffe takes on the role of a lifetime as Harry Potter.

Student Wizard

By JOE NAZZARO

This is the story of a young British schoolboy who discovers he is special. One day, this boy is offered an opportunity to leave home and travel to an extraordinary place where he will be surrounded by people dedicated to creating a magical world together...

OK, that little tale actually describes would-be wizard Harry Potter, but it could just as easily pertain to Daniel Radcliffe, the young actor selected to play him in a projected series of big-screen adaptations. The first film, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, opens this November, but Radcliffe says the enormity of it all still hasn't quite registered with him. "So many people auditioned for it," he remarks. "I never thought out of all those people that I would get it. It definitely has not sunk in yet."

Radcliffe is sitting in an office at Leavesden Studios just outside London—a former Rolls-Royce factory that in recent years has been a production base for *GoldenEye*, *Star Wars Episode I: The Phantom Menace* and now, the first *Harry Potter* film. Leavesden has become a second home of sorts for the novice actor, who spent much of the past year there, and is now back for a day's worth of *Potter*-related press. Considering he has just finished work on one of the year's most eagerly anticipated films, Radcliffe is surprisingly low-key about it all.

"I'm still leading a very normal life," he explains, "except that I spent the last two months on a broomstick! I do schoolwork all the time, and I see my friends regularly—it hasn't really sunk in for them either. One of my best friends is a total Harry Potter maniac; he has read the fourth book eight times."

Casting Spells

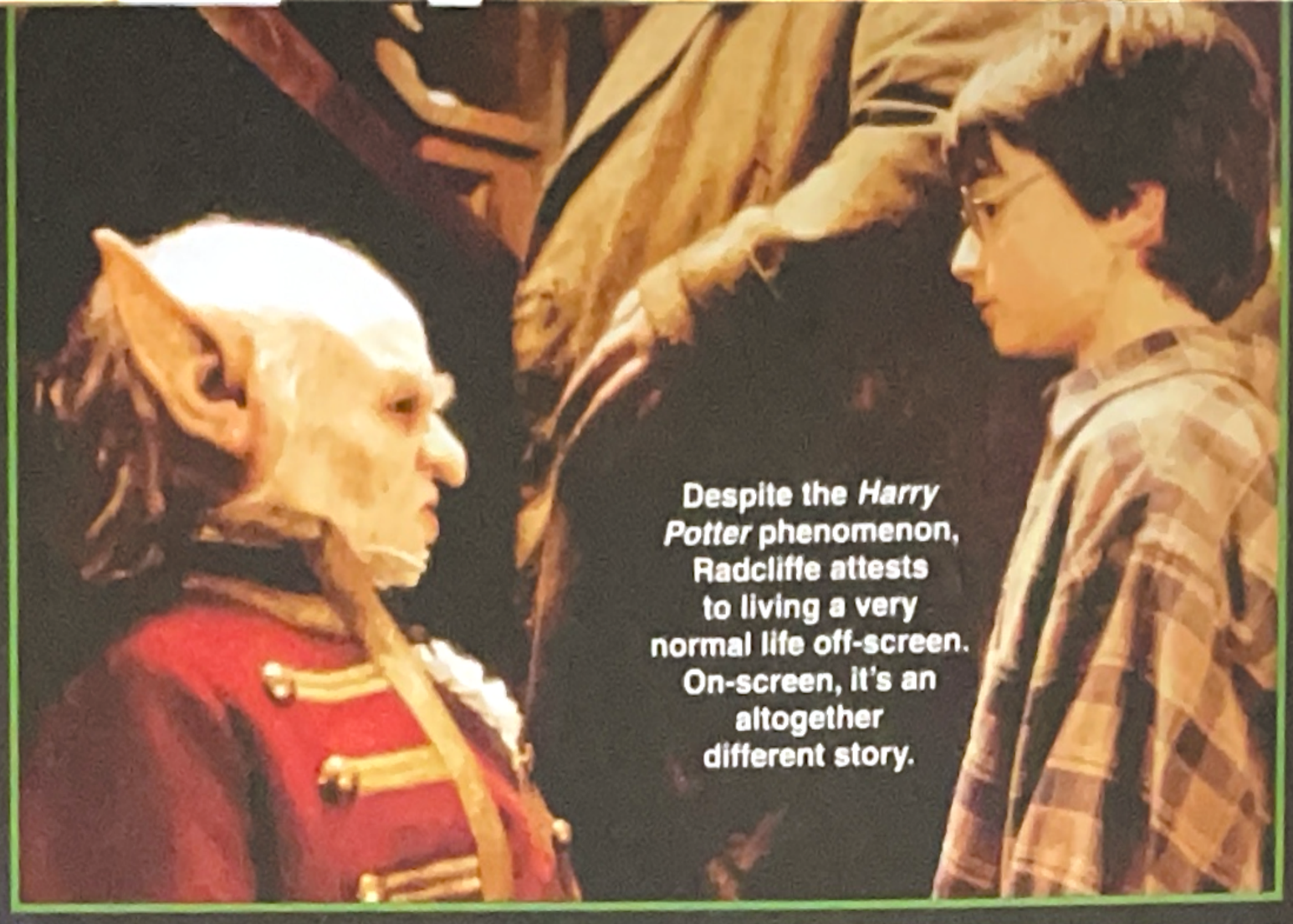
For the two or three people in the English-speaking world still unfamiliar with the character, Harry Potter is the creation of writer J.K. Rowling, who has published four bestselling novels in the series with a fifth in the works. In *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, the 11-year-old orphaned Harry is enduring a miserable life with his horrible aunt and uncle until one day he receives an invitation to attend Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. It turns out that Harry is actually the son of two powerful wizards who were killed by the evil Voldemort, whose attack left a lightning-shaped scar on the infant Harry's forehead. After a decade of living with ordinary people (called "Muggles"), the young wizard is finally ready to discover his magical heritage by enrolling at Hogwarts.

When Warner Bros. began making plans to bring Harry Potter to the big screen, their biggest challenge was finding an actor who could successfully play the eponymous wizard-in-training. In summer 2000, a massive talent search was launched, with thousands of aspiring Har-

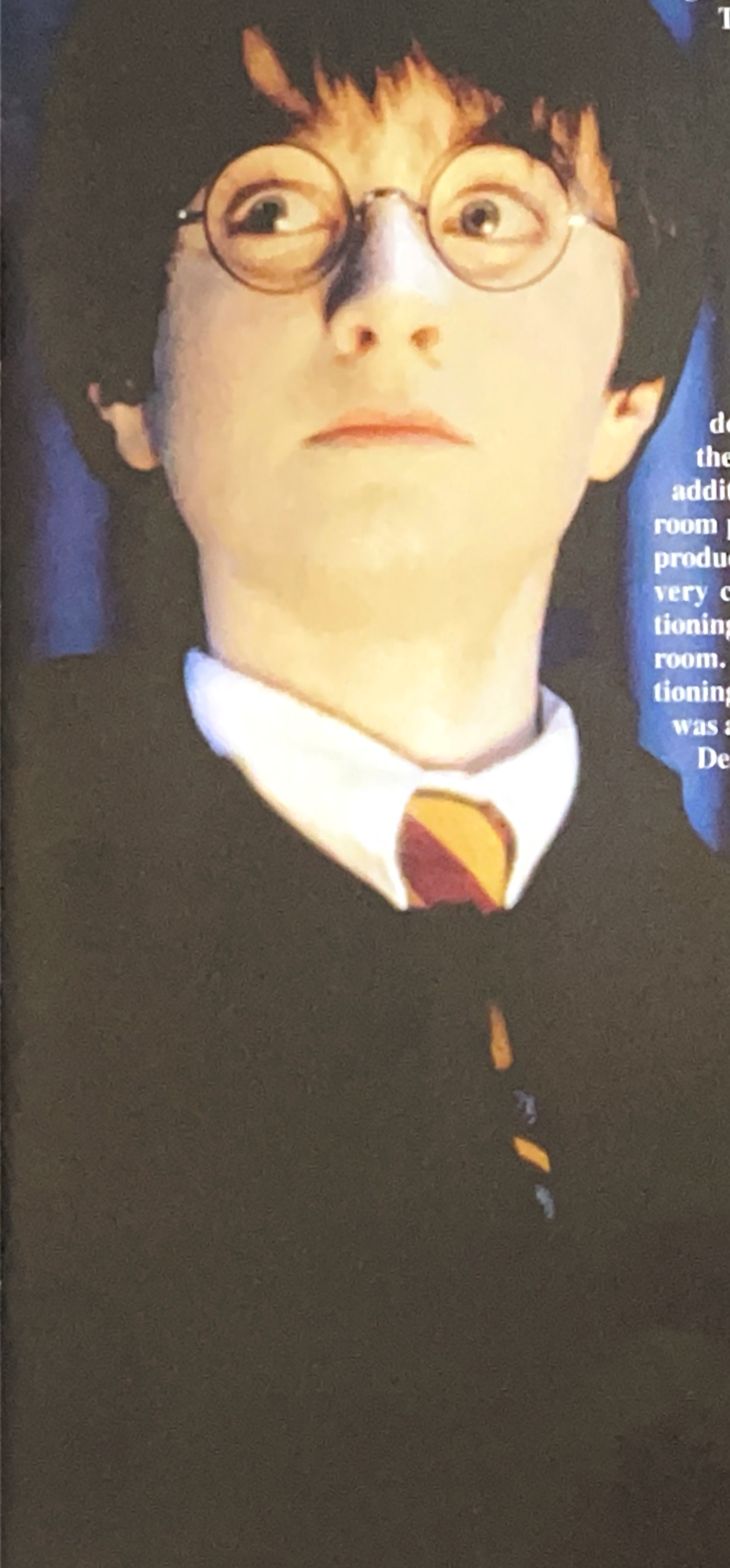
rys considered. The trades were full of reports that everyone from Jamie (*Billy Elliot*) Bell to *A.I.*'s Haley Joel Osment (an American) were in the running, although Rowling was adamant that Harry be played by a Brit.

Enter Radcliffe, a relative newcomer to the business, who had recently appeared in a new BBC adaptation of *David Copperfield* and the Pierce Brosnan film *The Tailor of Panama*. "It was very frightening," he recalls of the casting call, "because I knew how big the role was, and every day I heard a new name was up for it, and the names got more and more famous.

"I walked into a room with [director] Chris Columbus and producers David Heyman and Mark Radcliffe," he notes, "and they were all so nice. I said to them, 'I know I won't get this part, but you're all so nice, I don't really mind, because I like you and you've given me a very nice time.' Until the last moment when I was told I got the part, my expectations were, 'I won't get it,' so I was never confident. But they called me back for a screen test quite soon after that, so I thought, 'Oh, I must have done all right in the first one, so I'll give it another go and do my best.' That's all I could do."



Despite the *Harry Potter* phenomenon, Radcliffe attests to living a very normal life off-screen. On-screen, it's an altogether different story.



Radcliffe was familiar with the Harry Potter books, but he was not necessarily a fan. "I read the first two before I got the part, but at that time, I didn't read very much. I wasn't really *interested* in reading, but I looked at them as soon as I got the part. I read all four back-to-back and absolutely loved them."

Although there were a tremendous amount of actors competing for the lead role, Radcliffe was spared the additional pressure of sitting in a waiting room packed with potential Harrys. "The producers and the casting directors were very clever; they never let people auditioning for the same part sit in the same room. I was in a room with a boy auditioning for Neville, and another boy who was auditioning either for Lee Jordan or Dean Thomas."

But in the end, it was Radcliffe who landed the coveted role of Harry Potter. Rupert Grint won the part of Harry's best friend at Hogwarts, Ron Weasley, and Emma Watson was cast as their bookish schoolmate Hermione Granger.

"We were all in the same screen test together," remembers Radcliffe, "and we chatted away, but we were all so nervous that we didn't really click then. But when we found out that we got the parts, we met up with each other and clicked immediately, and I think that comes out on screen. If we hadn't gotten along immediately, it would have made the process less fun. They're such great people to be around, and if we hadn't got on well, it wouldn't have been half as good."

Cinematic Magicks

And with that, Radcliffe was launched into the magical world of Harry Potter, a world filled with fantastic creatures, Quidditch (a soccer-like game played on flying broomsticks) matches and some strange and wonderful people. Looking back at his very first day of filming, the actor knew he was in for a memorable time.

"I was so nervous," he admits. "I was really frightened, because it was very daunting looking at the call sheet and seeing the number of people who were going to be there. The first day was four people, including Rupert, Robbie Coltrane and me, so I thought, 'That's OK, four people. I can do four people.' Then I turned over the sheet and saw, 'Extras: 150,' so that was quite frightening."

The film's large scope and cast produced some memorable and bizarre moments for the neophyte actor. "You would be in the canteen and never know what you were going to see," he smiles. "When we were doing the Gringott's scenes, we would be standing by the canteen truck, and I would turn around and

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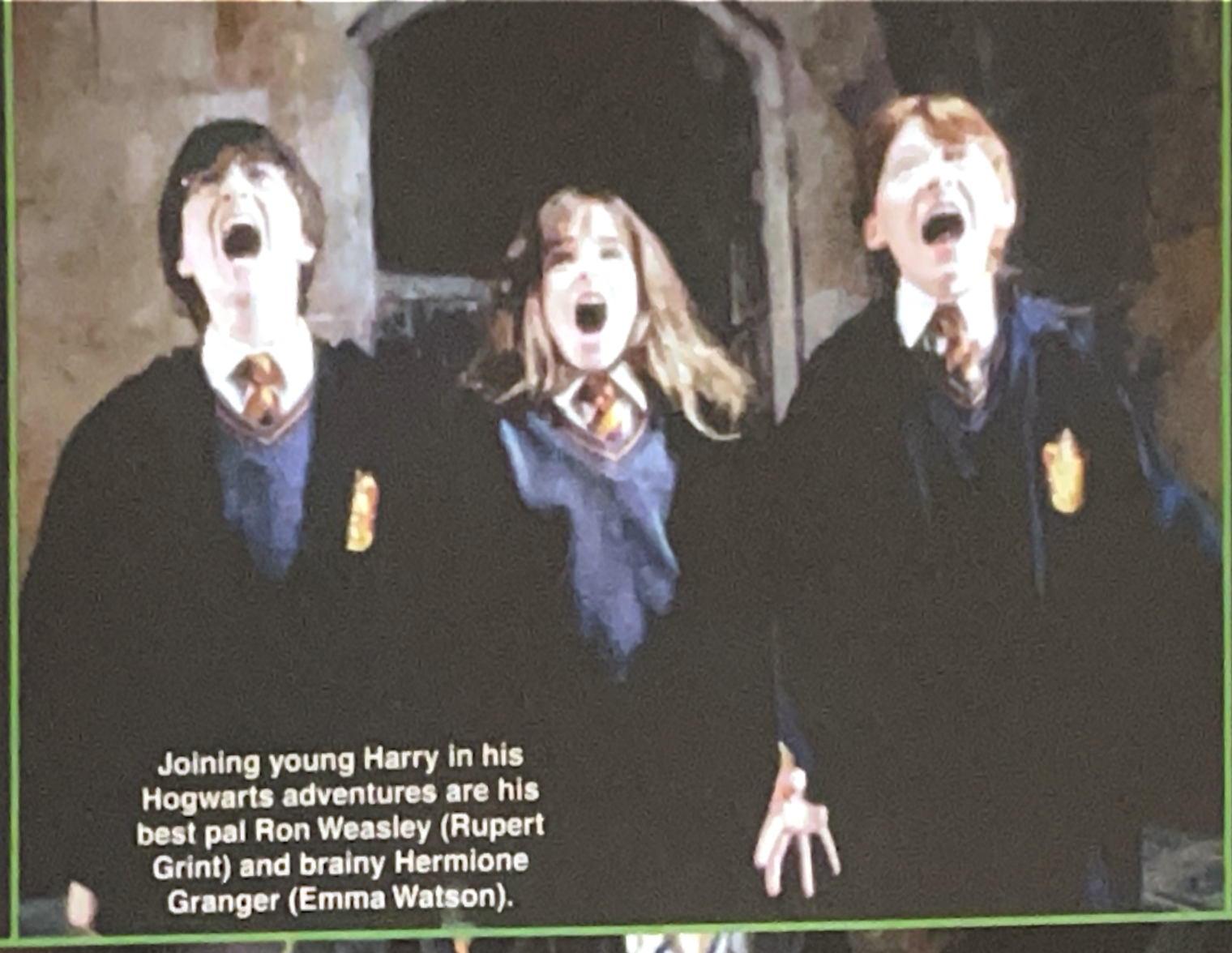
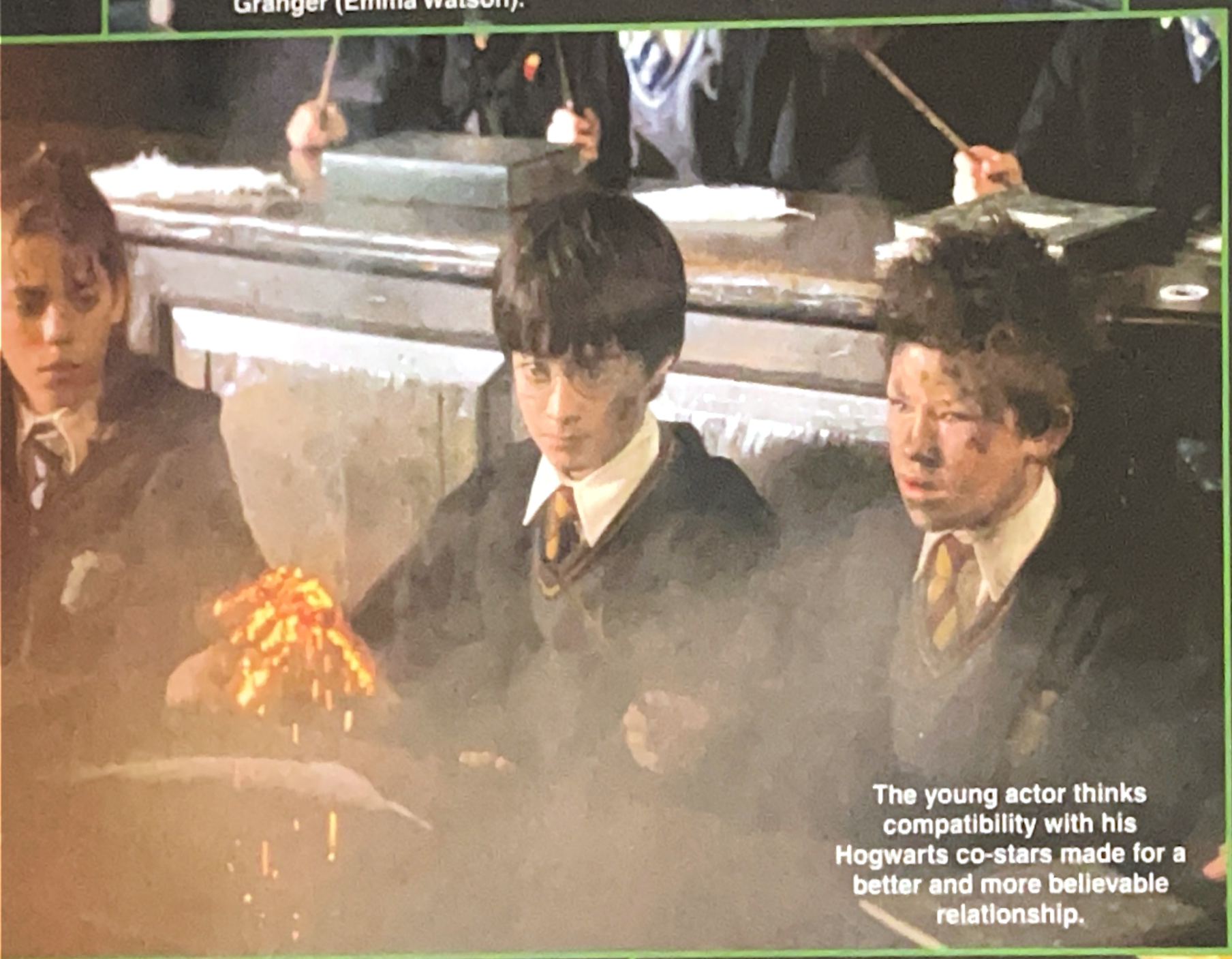
All Stone Photos

"I'm still leading a very normal life, except that I spent the last two months on a broomstick!"



Joining young Harry in his Hogwarts adventures are his best pal Ron Weasley (Rupert Grint) and brainy Hermione Granger (Emma Watson).



The young actor thinks compatibility with his Hogwarts co-stars made for a better and more believable relationship.

In addition to its young cast, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* features a virtual who's who of Britain's finest actors—two of whom Radcliffe had already worked with on *David Copperfield*: Dame Maggie Smith (who plays Professor McGonagall) and Zoe Wanamaker (the broom-riding instructor, Professor Hooch).

New castmates included Richard Harris, who plays Hogwarts' headmaster, Professor Dumbledore. "He was amazing, because he was very quiet and always in character," Radcliffe observes. "He was very nice, and really fantastic to work with."

Coltrane stars as Hagrid, the school's giant groundskeeper. "He is so funny; he is hysterical. He has an answer for absolutely everything."

Richard (*Sleepy Hollow*) Griffiths and Fiona Shaw portray Uncle Vernon and Aunt Petunia, Harry Potter's terrible Muggle relatives. "They treated me like a normal human being," he comments. "They're very funny, because they would bounce off each other. So one would make a comment and the other would come back with one—they're kind of like a dynamic duo."

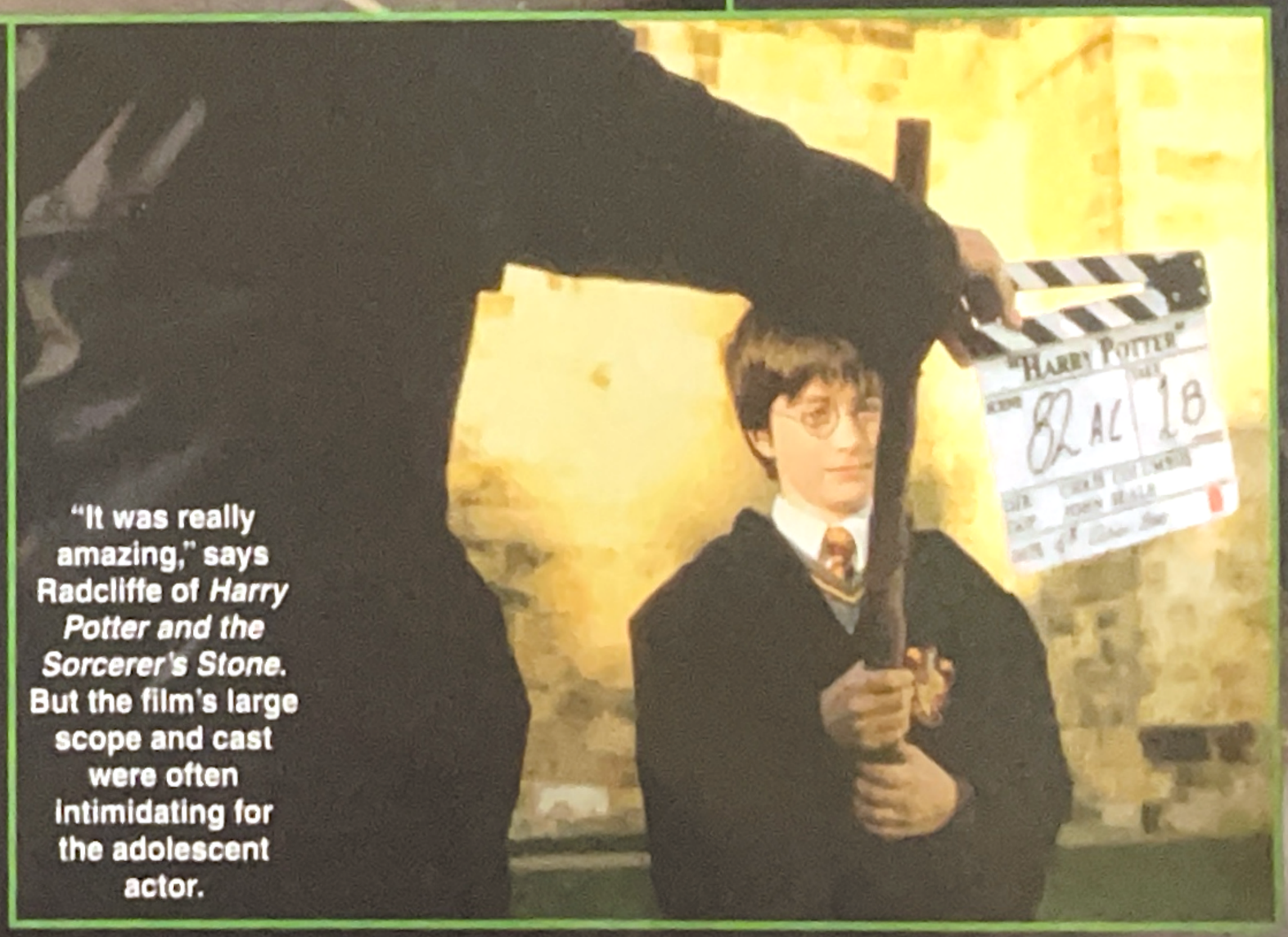
And what of Alan Rickman, who plays Harry's villainous Potions instructor, Professor Snape? "He's fantastic," gushes Radcliffe. "There was one scene where we had to keep reminding ourselves that it was only a film, because he was so amazingly terrifying. It was the first Potions lesson scene, and he was so frightening."

Enchanting Experiences

Of course, not all of the actor's co-stars were human, including Hedwig the owl, who plays an

be surrounded by goblins. It was really surreal: You would be surrounded by wizards and witches with tattoos on their heads and stuff. It was really amazing."

Supervising this strange world was Columbus, who had no difficulty working with a large group of young actors, thanks to his directorial experiences on such films as *Home Alone*, *Mrs. Doubtfire* and *Adventures in Babysitting*. "He's funny, he's cool and he's absolutely fantastic with children," praises Radcliffe. "When we were doing scenes in the Great Hall, every single extra was asking him questions, and he would treat them all like they were his age and take time out from directing to actually go and talk to them, as well as to Rupert, Emma and me. One of the reasons he's so good with kids is because he has four of his own. Some directors might not be like that, but he was amazing and really inspirational with his energy."



"It was really amazing," says Radcliffe of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. But the film's large scope and cast were often intimidating for the adolescent actor.

important part in Harry's life at Hogwarts. As anyone who has read one of the books can tell you, owls are used to deliver mail to the school's residents, leading to one of the film's most memorable scenes.

"That was definitely a bonus," Radcliffe reports of his owl experience, "especially because we had the best team of animal trainers. There was one very funny moment where Hedwig was sitting on this chest of books in the Great Hall. Whenever Chris said 'Cut,' Hedwig would try to run down the table and escape. It was really funny."

When you have a Great Hall filled with owls delivering mail, it can sometimes get a little difficult to distinguish fantasy from reality. "A man from the art department came to the set and brought his sons or nephews with him. It was during the Christmas scene in the Great Hall, and everybody was pulling crackers and things, and this boy looked around and said, 'There should be spiders coming out of the crackers!' He had memorized that from the book!"

With production on *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* finally completed, Radcliffe can now fondly look back at some of the shoot's more challenging incidents. "One of them was the final chamber scene," he acknowledges, "because it was so intimate. There were only two people in the scene, but it was still intense, and it was very hard and required much concentration. I said, 'I'm tired' on the film twice, and that day was one of them. I was absolutely shattered. I could hardly walk, because even after we finished that scene, my mind was still focused on what we had to do the next day, so I was slowly wearing myself down.

Hagrid (Robbie Coltrane), the school's giant groundskeeper, introduces Harry to the world of Gringott's Bank.

"I would turn around and be surrounded by goblins."

"The atmosphere on that set was so fantastic, but it was one of the hardest scenes to do, especially when I had to get about four feet away from a nine-foot wall of flame, which was scary."

Playing Harry Potter is not without its share of perks, though. While Radcliffe didn't have time to make many public appearances during filming, he did show up on the BBC's live Comic Relief telecast to present a check collected by kids on the set. He also got to meet author J.K. Rowling, his character's creator—an opportunity that millions of young readers would happily have swapped their younger siblings to experience.

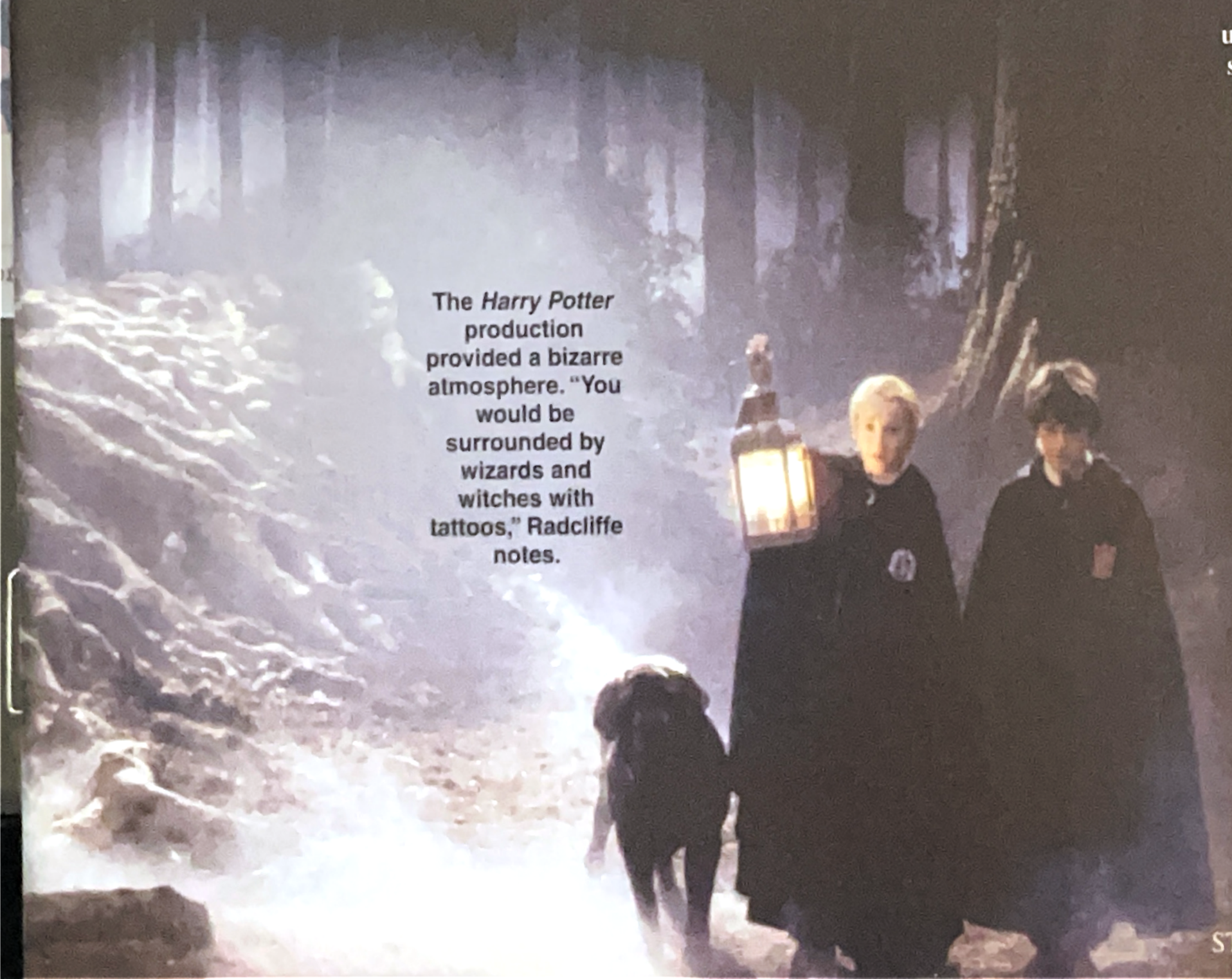
"I hope she is happy with the way I'm doing it," he notes. "She was really nice and very down-to-Earth."

Did the author have any insights to share about Harry? "She didn't, but if *anybody* has advice for me, I would listen to it, because if it helps me produce the right person on screen, then I would welcome that with open arms. I need as much help as I can get."

Now that his work on the first film is complete, Radcliffe isn't taking much time off before starting work on the sequel, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (tentatively intended to commence next month).

"We haven't seen a schedule for it yet, but [it'll start shooting] as soon as possible," he reveals. "I'm looking forward to it, because it's my favorite book. I'm really looking forward to the scenes with Moaning Myrtle, and where I discover I'm a parsel tongue."

As for *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, the enthusiastic actor is quick to tell moviegoers what to expect November 16. "A very good film," Daniel Radcliffe promises. "I haven't been to any of the rushes or any of the editing rooms, but from what I've seen just filming it, it *is* going to be good. All the locations, the sets, the performances—from Robbie Coltrane to Alan Rickman and all of those people—it looks *really* cool!"



The *Harry Potter* production provided a bizarre atmosphere. "You would be surrounded by wizards and witches with tattoos," Radcliffe notes.

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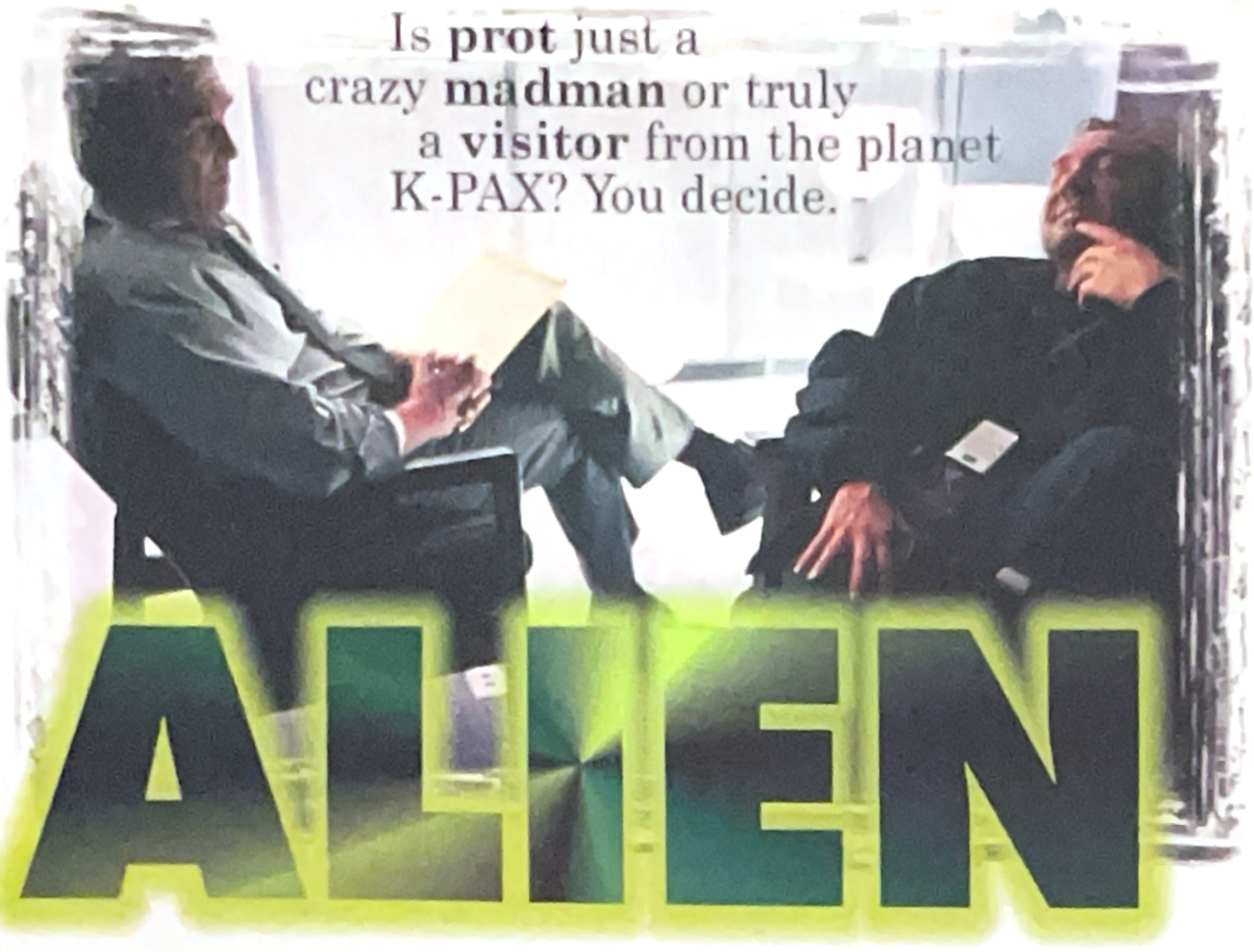


ALIEN THEI

By WILL MURRAY

When he begins talking about his latest film *K-PAX*, producer Lloyd (*Tomb Raider*) Levin doesn't seem to be describing anything new in SF. "It's about a man who is picked up by the police in Grand Central Station, who appears normal in every respect," he says thoughtfully. "But he's taken to the Manhattan Psychiatric Institute because he insists that he's from another planet. He's brought to the attention of a doctor, who takes him on as a patient. And although this doctor is very skeptical during their initial meetings, he begins to wonder."

So far, it's a familiar premise, but in his quiet, understated way, Levin goes on. "Prot [pronounced like goat and not capitalized] seems to be having a profound effect on the patients and the people around him. He seems to be having an effect on the doctor as well. And prot has a unique way of looking at the world. Some of the patients actually start to do better. Some of the staff are inspired by him. Prot seems to bring out the best *humanity* in a person."

No, this isn't your typical alien-from-outer-space movie. The first clue to that is that the film stars Kevin (*American Beauty*) Spacey as prot, the amnesiac who claims to hail from the idyllic planet K-PAX, come to Earth to visit and offer some intriguing advice to its "children." Another clue is that Spacey plays opposite Jeff Bridges, who himself once portrayed a very unconventional alien in *Starman*.

Therapy Sessions

Based on the novel by Gene Brewer, *K-PAX* begins with the conventions of the SF genre and takes them in thoughtful, unexpected directions. "It's a great story," notes Levin. "It's rare to come upon a movie that has all these unusual plot elements. It's funny. It's very dramatic. It's suspenseful. All of these things in combination are great for each other. The thing we really concentrated on was the same line that the book walked, which was to make it credible as a psychological thriller and to give it a reasonable reality base—as well as maintain the possibility that the SF elements were viable. The book does a very nice balancing act. It keeps you guessing as to exactly what's going on. We were looking to create that same sense."

The movie, scripted by Charles Leavitt and Bryan Goluboff, follows the novel closely, according to Levin, but had to be pared down for the screen. "The book is really rich and detailed," he says. "We just couldn't handle all that detail. There are pages and pages where prot describes life on K-PAX. We just couldn't include it all. So we had to choose how we were going to convey that within the conventional running time."

There is nothing conventional about *K-PAX*, either as a book or a film. For one thing, author Brewer named the chief psychiatrist, played by Bridges, after himself, although Bridges' character has been renamed Mark Powell for the screen. "In the book," explains Levin, "I think it was a great device to help create a reality for the reader, because the book has all these SF elements, but the approach is like a psychological thriller. It's like science fiction without any fantasy whatsoever. In the movie, we try to preserve an

"I love saying this. It's not *really* a science fiction film. It's a psychological thriller."

Photo: Ken Regan

Meet prot (Kevin Spacey). Whether human crazy or alien tourist, he'll have an impact on everyone.

absolute reality, so the SF themes are dealt with in a very realistic context."

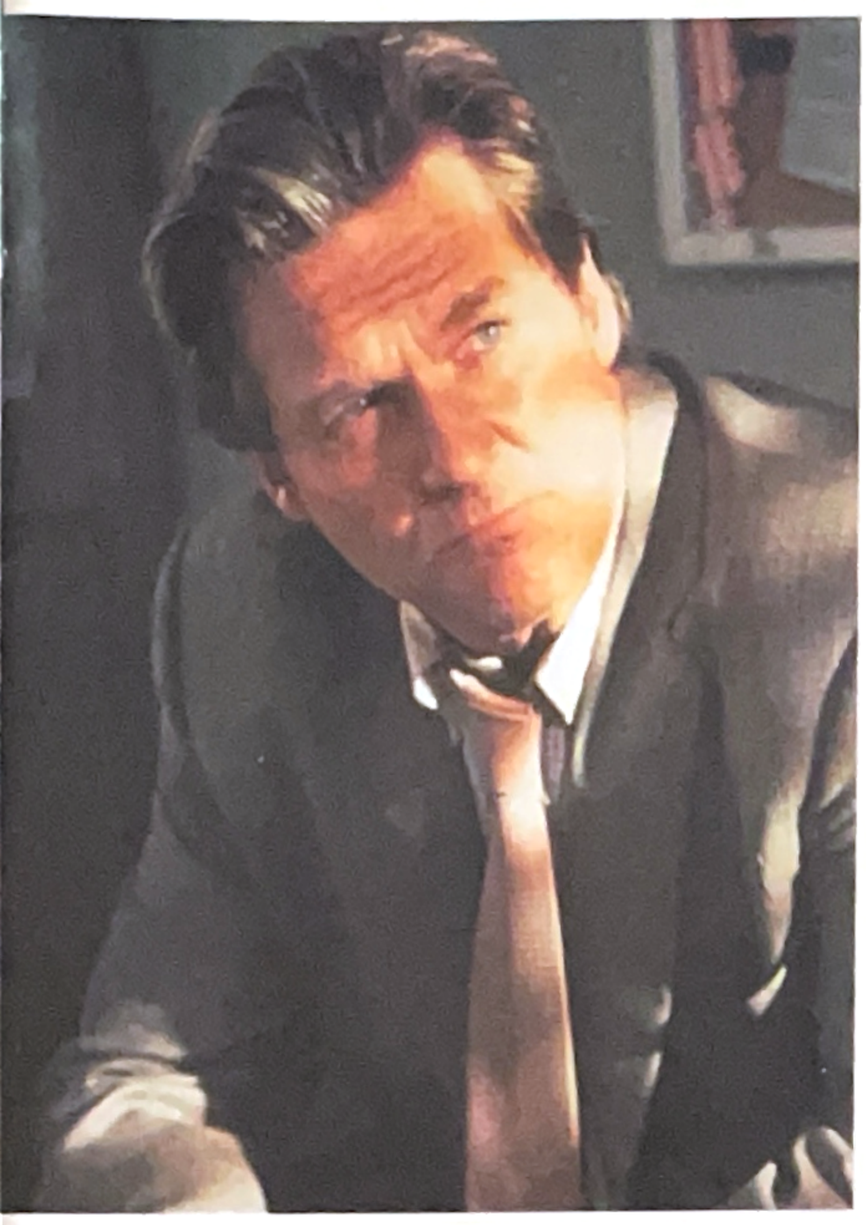
Much in the tradition of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, *The Fisher King* and *Awakenings*, *K-PAX* boasts a strong ensemble cast that includes David Patrick Kelly, Alfre Woodard and Mary McCormack. But the real star is Spacey.

"It's a demanding role," the producer observes. "The character is unique, but not in a one-dimensional way. As a psychological study, there's plenty of subtlety to him, so there has to be nuance in the performance.

RAPY

That's where Kevin is so wonderfully equipped. His talents are so great, and that's what he brought to prot.

"In a sense," Levin continues, "you're talking about a movie with multiple personalities. That's one way of looking at it. And the fact that Kevin can portray *all* those personalities—what's really amazing about his performance is when you see it a second or third time, you start to see all the nuances. He's simultaneously playing a number of these characters, but very, very subtly. He's a genius actor."



Dr. Mark Powell (Jeff Bridges) ponders the puzzle that is prot. *Can* he cure this troubled patient? *Should* he?

And Levin has equal praise for Spacey's co-star. "Jeff Bridges is one of our greatest actors," he states flatly. "So if you have the opportunity to work with him in any role, it's a dream. Jeff brings such reality and naturalness. It's through his eyes that the audience experiences prot. As an actor, Jeff's able to do what Gene did when he wrote the book in the first person. You're watching the story unfold through Jeff's eyes. He lets you know that these are real people. It's a real situation. There's no artifice. He brings such believability to everything. He was a great choice."

Medical Treatments

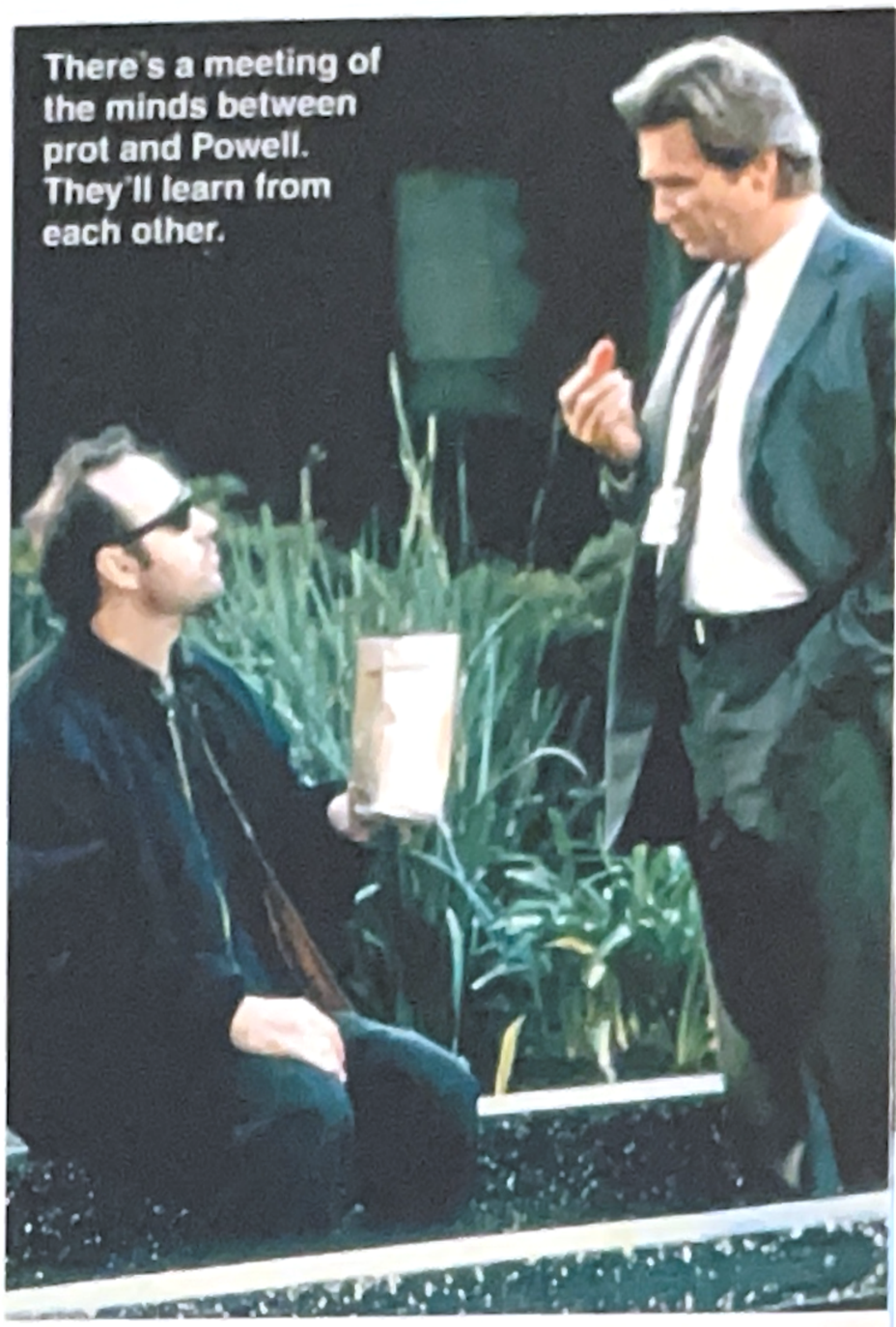
Levin is himself a great choice to produce a film as unusual and genre-bending as *K-PAX*. His credit list—working at Lawrence Gordon Productions alongside veteran moviemaker Gordon—includes such genre titles as *The Rocketeer*, *Mystery Men*, *Event Horizon* and the *TimeCop* TV series.

Directing *K-PAX* is an unusual choice, Iain (*Hackers*) Softley, who also helmed *Backbeat* and *The Wings of the Dove*. "When we spoke to directors in the past about this movie," recalls Levin, "many of them were latching onto this or that element because there's a fair amount of comedy [in the film] as well. Iain seemed to grasp *all* the elements of the story. And the thing that's really remarkable about what he has done with this movie—and he sold us on this when we started meeting with him—is that for a 'talking heads' movie, really visually provocative."

Talking heads? What kind of SF movie is *K-PAX*? "I love saying this," admits Levin. "It's not *really* a science fiction film. It's a psychological thriller. Essentially, it's a two-character piece. On the other hand, it's very visually complex and strong and satisfying. Iain saw such rich possibilities with the material, and he delivered on them."

The film's spine is the interaction between Dr. Powell and the amnesiac prot. They are very different personalities, and that tension-filled counterpoint is at the heart of *K-PAX*. "I think prot is very aware of how precious life is," remarks Levin. "Time is all we've got. And Powell is at a place in his life where, for whatever reasons, he's prevented from being truly engaged. He's somehow disenfranchised from his own life, and his challenge is to get his shit together. There's a conflict within himself that's preventing him from feeling joy in his life. So you have this one character who's engaged to the max, and this other who's having difficulties appreciating how amazing and precious life is."

Make no mistake: Ambiguity, not special FX, is what drives this unusual film. "Based on what the science fiction genre usually represents," he says carefully, "it would almost be a mistake to call *K-PAX* a science fiction movie. That makes you immediately think of a certain kind of movie, which would be wrong, and really underestimates and pigeonholes science fiction. Nonetheless, I think it is a bit of a misnomer. *K-PAX* is a drama with some psychological SF themes."



On the surface, *K-PAX* might seem to be a mind-expanding mystery about a single truth: Is prot truly from another world? And can Dr. Powell unearth the truth? Levin disagrees with that view. "I don't think that *exactly* describes the conflict between prot and Powell," he contends. "I do think that Powell seems to intellectually and conveniently accommodate vagueness in the grey areas of his life, and prot's able to get through to him and get him to pay attention to where his heart is at."

As for the puzzle of prot, Levin refers back to the source novel's ending—which suggests prot might be a different kind of alien than what he purports to be—without saying whether or not his film follows it.

"If you've talked to somebody who has read the book, that might be *their* interpretation of it," he concedes. "Other people have read the book and chosen to believe something different. I think the book has an open ending. I don't think prot is an absolute in terms of the truth. He finds symbols in obvious things that transcend our tendency to sometimes get all complex about issues." There is one possible clue that may solve the denouement dilemma: prot means "sojourner" in the K-PAXian language.

K-PAX is quite a departure from Levin's most recent project, the FX extravaganza *Tomb Raider*. It was a huge challenge, he admits. "At times, it felt like so much pressure. We had lots of press on the set, and they were all saying, 'Why do you want to do a movie based on a video game? Movies based on video games suck.' If *Tomb Raider* had failed, you could write off the whole genre."

Although critical reception was downbeat, the film did well enough to virtually guarantee a sequel. "I'm proud of *Tomb Raider*," Levin smiles. "It was a really diffi-

All Photos: Copyright 2001 Universal Studios

Powell wonders: Could prot actually be for real? The astronomical information prot provides about K-PAX paints a disturbing picture.

Photo: Ken Regan

it got a shot. I'm bullish on that movie. I like *Mystery Men* very much."

Levin was behind the translation of Dave Stevens' popular retro-'30s serial hero, *The Rocketeer*. "I really love *The Rocketeer*, and I'm really proud of it. It's a great adaptation. I feel it fell between the cracks a bit, and we were stuck with the Disney label. To me, the movie should have pushed the envelope on PG-13, and appealed to an action-adventure

"Prot seems to bring out the best *humanity* in a person."

audience. I think mom, dad and the kids were looking at it and saying, 'It's a Disney movie, but it has all these guns in it.' "

Patient Records

Along more traditional genre lines, Levin produced the SF-horror film *Event Horizon*, which starred Laurence Fishburne and Sam Neill. "There are good things in *Event Horizon*," he argues. "I don't think we ever quite properly nailed the ending. It's a movie that would have benefitted from being more complex and thought-provoking. It kind of went for the jugular a little too much."

He was also involved with *Predator 2*. "*Predator 2* was great fun," he recalls. "I was also on the first *Predator*. I was at the studio then [as a 20th Century Fox executive]. There's something so primal about *Predator*—Arnold Schwarzenegger's transformation into this primitive being when he goes to war with the Predator. To me, there is such purity to that. It's really exciting. *Predator 2* wasn't as gripping."

While there is no sign of a *Predator 3*, the

All Other Photos: Suzanne Tenner

cult movie. The thing it absolutely succeeded at was delivering on that character. That has to do with Angelina Jolie as an actress. I think Lara Croft was nailed. That, to me, was 90 percent of what the movie is all about. I look forward to doing a sequel."

Less successful was *Mystery Men*, based on the Bob Burden superhero satire-fest from Dark Horse Comics. "That's the *one* movie I've been involved with that just didn't get its day in the Sun," Levin laments. "That was a distribution thing. We didn't get into many theaters. We opened the same day as *The Sixth Sense*. The weekend before, *The Blair Witch Project* opened wide. I don't think

When prot returns "home," he can take one person along; hence a "Why I Want to Go to K-PAX" essay contest among patients and staff.

hunter aliens continue to infest novels and crossover comic books, usually at war with the likes of Batman and creatures from another, more successful Fox film franchise, *ALIENS*. Could *Predator* be revived for the screen? "It could still be a long-term franchise," Levin allows. "If you look at what Dark Horse has done with the comic book, they've created such a rich world for these two movie cultures. There's no reason why there couldn't be more significant adventures. It definitely *could* be resurrected."

Comic book-inspired projects seem to be filling up Levin's résumé. "I like comic books," he explains. "I would say the same thing about video games. You're working with great characters and stories, as well as phenomenal worlds. They're both great movie material. I've had a relationship with Dark Horse Comics for many years. *Time-Cop* the TV show came out of that."

Family life causes pain for Powell and his wife (Mary McCormack). All is not well with their children.

Some of Levin's dream projects are unexpected and quirky titles from the Dark Horse stable. "One is *Hellboy*. The other is Paul Chadwick's *Concrete*, which I think will make an amazing movie. We have the script, which is written by Peter Jackson and his wife. They wrote it right before going into production on *Lord of the Rings*."

One of those fantasy productions is set to become a reality: the adaptation of Mike Mignola's *Hellboy*. "That's coming along great," Levin updates. "We're working on that with Guillermo del Toro. He loved the script, and he's definitely directing. I'm certain it will be his next movie after *Blade 2*."

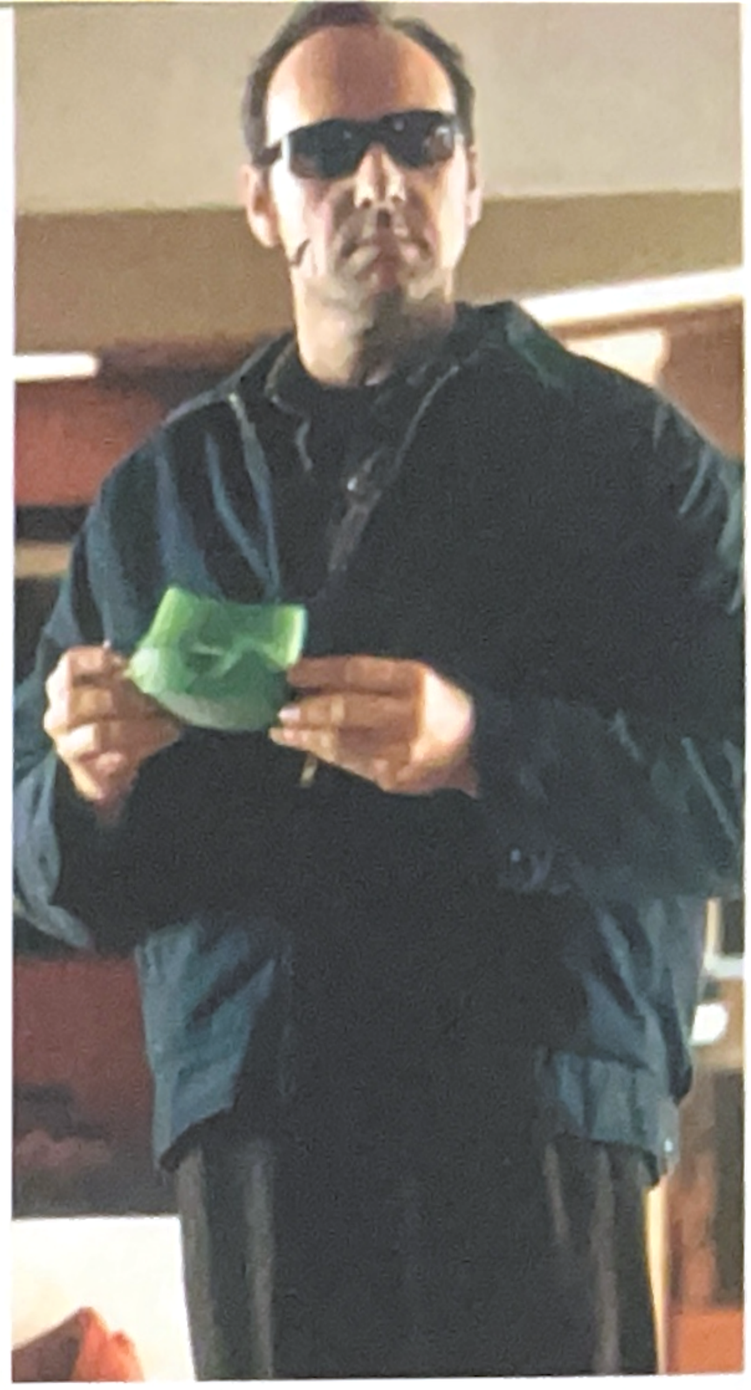
Another of Levin's promising pet projects has become the stuff of unmade film legend. "If I could go back to a dream project," he reveals, "it would be *Watchmen*. We have the property. To this day, there has been nothing like it in the movies. It would be *really* groundbreaking."

Considered dead, despite a Sam Hamm script and Terry Gilliam once attached as director, a film version of the Alan Moore-Dave Gibbons DC Comics graphic novel deconstruction of superheroes may actually be more likely to get made today. "The advantage now is that as visually ambitious as the graphic novel was, you *could* achieve it that much easier with CGI," Levin points out. "You could actually make a bigger movie on much less money."

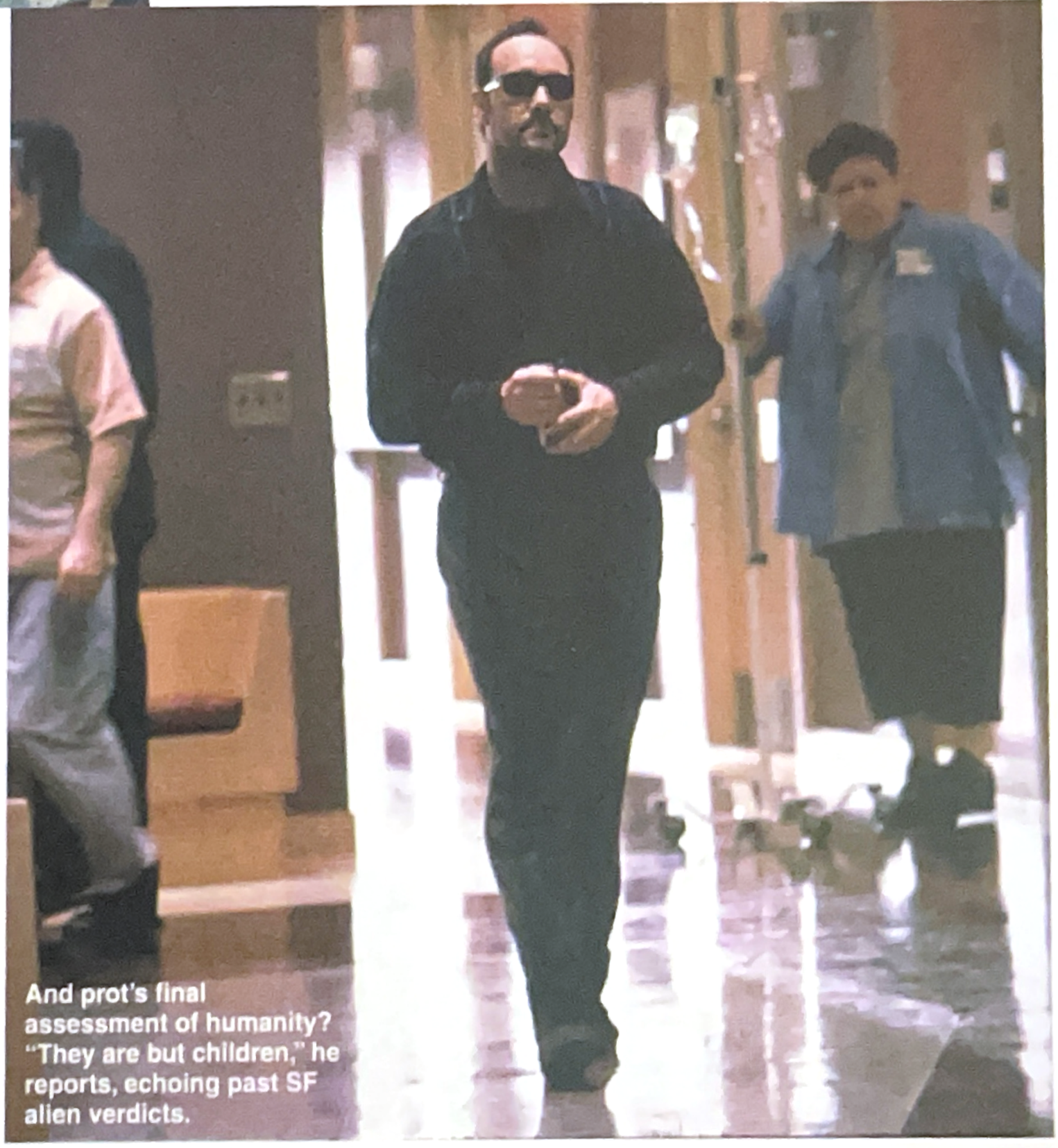
In the meantime, *K-PAX*, his latest project, will be in theaters October 26. A sequel already exists in the form of Brewer's novel *On a Beam of Light*. Could this be the basis of a film follow-up?

"It's funny," muses Levin. "This type of movie is not normally thought about as the kind of thing you would sequelize, but it's a very interesting idea, given some of the themes in *K-PAX*. If they were in a different kind of movie, you would think about sequelizing them in a heartbeat. That's obviously how Gene Brewer sees it. I know he's in the midst of writing a third one with prot."

Levin's answer is starting to sound like a polite "No, thank you," until the producer—who admits he hasn't yet read *On a Beam of Light*—is pressed further. "Oh, absolutely," Lloyd Levin answers. "It's really intriguing to think about a sequel. I've heard what the story is and it's a really great idea—and very different from *K-PAX*. It would be fun, because we would have the opportunity to do a sequel that's also very, very different."



In Gene Brewer's novel, prot's favorite films are, naturally, *Starman*, *E.T.*, *The Day the Earth Stood Still* and—*Bambi*.



And prot's final assessment of humanity? "They are but children," he reports, echoing past SF alien verdicts.

Design & Layout: Bill Mohalley

DOUBLE VISION

Jet Li is looking straight ahead, a Cheshire cat smile crossing his face. "I might look at you and not like you," he says.

No, Li has not taken offense at an inappropriate or impertinent question. No, this STARLOG correspondent is not about to experience painful martial arts retribution, torn limb from limb for the mere act of asking something stupid, forgetting a factoid or missing a deadline. The easygoing, seemingly blissful kung fu master-turned-action hero is simply making a point. It's a point, as is his wont, that is often couched in Buddhist philosophy and personal vision.

Li is holding court in a spartan trailer on the Los Angeles location of his latest film, the science fiction/action-adventure *The One* (due out November 2). Typical of the movie's schedule, Li's workday starts at midnight and will include a slew of high-flying moves inside a power station. Li, much like the legendary Bruce Lee, proves to be a difficult interview, in that any attempt to elicit film anecdotes is inevitably short-circuited by a detour into the things he holds in higher esteem—Buddhist philosophy and his approach to martial arts. That's a point driven home when he's questioned about how his material riches and lavish lifestyle, the results of a superstar career in Hong Kong cinema and burgeoning U.S. stardom on the strength of films like *Lethal Weapon 4* and *Romeo Must Die*, coincide with the precepts of his religion.

"Yes, I have money and a life that many people don't have," explains Li, "but I'm nothing special. I never think of myself that way, because at the end of the day the important thing is that you have a good heart."

Split Personalities

The actor claims it was in the spirit of learning and creating that led him to tackle the rigors of *The One*. He plays both hero—Gabe Yulaw, a LA cop—and villain—Gabriel Yulaw, his diabolical mirror-image self, who has already killed all their other parallel-world incarnations, absorbing their energies in his quest to be *The One*.

"When I first saw the script, I thought, 'This is a *typical* science fiction movie,' " says Li, who won the role after the Rock passed on the project. "If they didn't pick me, it would probably have been a routine American action movie. But when they chose me, I thought, 'We have to do some things differently. We have to share some infor-

mation through this character, to get a message out through him.' I didn't want this to be a pure, physical action film."

So Li brought in another writer, Robert Kamen, who was familiar with the actor's approach to martial arts and its philosophy, to revise the script by Glen Morgan and James Wong. The result was a version that pleased Li. "With this script, we're getting *inside* these characters—the good and the bad," says Li. "We're finding out what they're thinking. The bad guy, my duplicate, is a straightforward attacking character, but we find out *why* he's that way. My good guy character is a reluctant hero who has a normal life and a family and doesn't really want to become the One. But he does that in order to protect his normal life. This is more than just the typical action hero with big muscles and a limited outlook. My character must deal with the idea of killing himself, and how many people would consider him a murderer."

Li has found much in this tale of parallel worlds (complete with a Multiverse Bureau of Investigation) and duplicate images to like. "I thought the story about us living in one of many universes was real cool. I like the science fiction-action stuff. I've never been in a movie like this. It's a real challenge fighting myself. There have been many movies where actors play two roles, but they've never crossed the line to fight. This is the first movie where Jet Li fights Jet Li."

Consequently, it comes as little surprise when the actor's memories of making *The One* focus on those fight sequences, choreographed by Hong Kong action director Corey Yuen. "The tough scenes have definitely been where I fight myself," he offers. "Usually I just play the good guy who fights the bad guy. Now I need to fight my double, so I've got to work twice as hard. I need to do the part of the good guy—fight-fight-fight—then the next day I need to change my wardrobe and fight against what I just did the day before in order to do both sides. I really have to concentrate on incorporating their different characters into the fights. Their personalities are different, their philosophies are different. That's tough, because one guy is very angry and trying to beat his double, while the other is trying to protect himself, so I'm changing back and forth between angry and good all the time."

Double Photos: Peter Iovino

Jet Li faces off against his toughest opponent—himself.

By MARC SHAPIRO

DOUBLE VISION

Jet Li plays both the good guy—a California cop—and the bad guy—his diabolical doppelgänger—in *The One*.

Double Photos: Peter Iovino

Despite its SF setting, the action of *The One* belongs to traditional martial arts movies. "But in these other universes, the characters also have other abilities. They can run faster and jump higher, but when it comes to the martial arts, we're going with traditional moves—bigger and more exaggerated for the movies—but still in keeping with the styles I used when I first started out years ago and had nothing on my mind but becoming a martial arts champion."

Mirror Images

Li lapses back into personal philosophy in describing what he has learned about himself as an actor in this film. He also addresses real life vs. movie life and the concept of family. Eventually, he lands on a specific. "In this movie, I had to learn how to be a cop. I had to learn how to shoot like a cop, talk like a cop. I had a lot of people I could turn to. I learned from the director, the producer and my acting coach."

Given his growing status in the industry, one has to wonder how Li has gotten along with Morgan and Wong, the producer-director duo who have established a reputation for wanting things their way (in such projects as *Final Destination*, TV's *The Others* and *Space: Above & Beyond*). Li claims the relationship, while not perfect, has been good.

"They're young and they have a lot of energy and some great ideas," he says of Morgan and Wong. "A movie is always about teamwork. There are always differences of opinion, but the goal is always the same: to make a successful film. Sometimes we fight, but so do most families."

Prior to *The One*, Li starred in the summer 2001 martial arts film *Kiss of the Dragon*, lensed in France for producer Luc (*The Fifth Element*) Besson, and with action choreography by Yuen. Li says that *Kiss* is not cut from the typical action cloth. "Americans always like big action movies where the hero is a superhero, always comes in and saves the day. In this film, I play a *real* man who focuses on his work, does not know how to deal with women but, as the story unfolds, learns the importance of keeping his word. This is a quiet love story as well as an action movie."

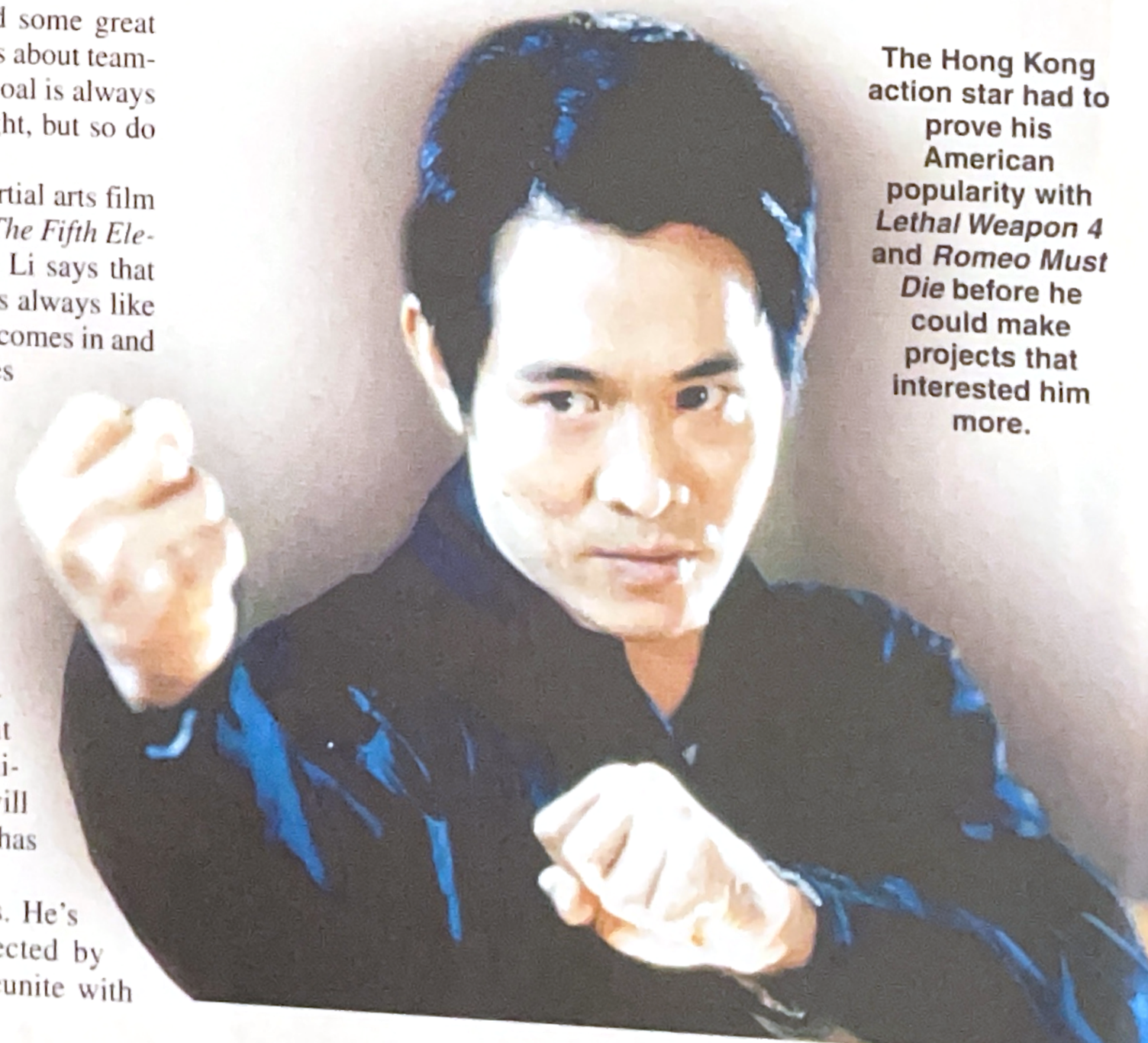
Li also drops some vague hints about his latest genre adventure: Co-producing, with Mel Gibson, *Invincible*, a TNT TV movie series pilot that stars Billy Zane and airs in November. The show is equal parts *X-Men* and traditional Chinese philosophy, Li says. "It contains five characters who each represent different philosophical elements and work together to combat universal evil. Nobody is 100 percent good or bad, which will make for some interesting stories. Working with Mel has been an enjoyable experience."

Several other projects find Li in interesting combos. He's finishing *Hero*, a Chinese-language period film directed by Yimou (*Raise the Red Lantern*) Zhang. Then, he'll reunite with action choreographer Yuen and writer Kamen for a comedy-adventure about a Tibetan monk visiting New York City. Li will also star in *First Emperor* and co-produce (with *Romeo Must Die*'s Joel Silver). Finally, Kamen is scripting Li's next—and most intriguing—project. It'll team Li with fellow Hong Kong action star Jackie Chan.

The actor then confirms that he is indeed, despite rumors to the contrary, still committed at this time to playing Kato in the big-screen version of *The Green Hornet*—he's just waiting for the right script.

One thing he *did* turn down, however, was the opportunity to appear in Silver's *Matrix* sequels. He cryptically explains, "Yes, I was offered a role, but I did not take it. The directors [the Brothers Wachowski] are very talented, and they know how to shoot martial arts films. They did *not* need me."

Li is reminded that despite a long and storied history as a star in Hong Kong cinema, he is only now starting to make headway in America thanks to roles in *Lethal Weapon 4* and *Romeo Must Die* (which he discussed in STARLOG #273). The actor is surprisingly candid in saying that while he's appreciative of audiences' response to him in those movies, he did not willingly go into them.



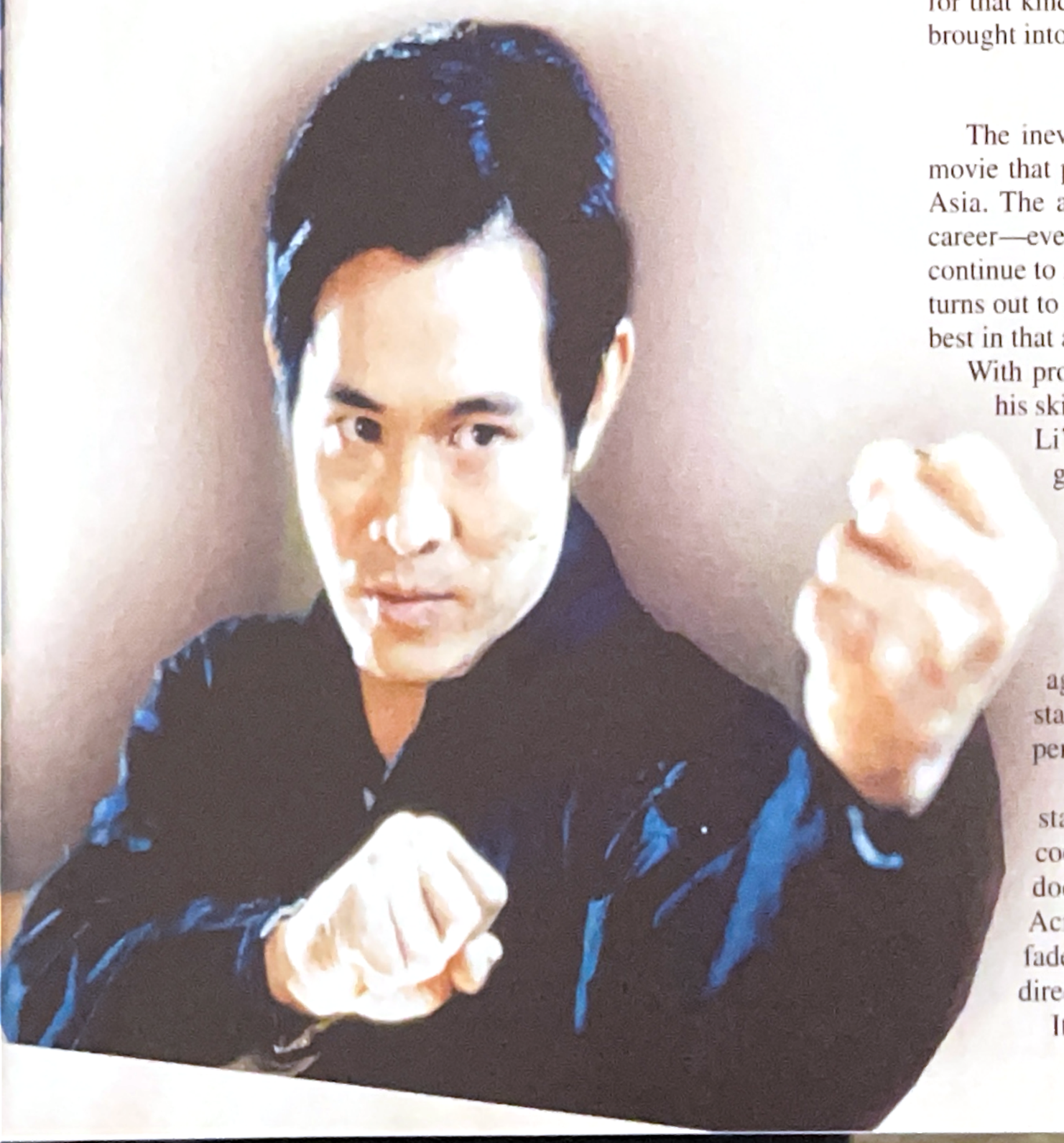
The Hong Kong action star had to prove his American popularity with *Lethal Weapon 4* and *Romeo Must Die* before he could make projects that interested him more.

All One Photos: Copyright 2001 Revolution Studios

Double Photos: Frank Masi

"Those are *not* the kinds of films I wanted to do in the beginning," he admits, "but I needed to do them to open the door and prove something to the studios. Without a track record, it was going to be hard to get somebody to trust me. In the States, I'm still the new guy. So I had to make movies with characters that I did *not* really like. But both films were big learning experiences for me. I learned a lot about how American action movies are made and I was able to work with some good people."

He's equally candid in assessing the across-the-board success of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, another movie Li turned down. "For fans of Chinese films, this is *not* a special movie. But, for most people, this is a film they've never seen before. The timing was right. The audience was waiting for that kind of film. It's pretty much a traditional Chinese film just brought into the American market."



Twin Views

The inevitable buzz surrounding *The One* is that it may be the movie that puts Li's U.S. profile on par with his superstar status in Asia. The actor laughs at the notion of any *one* film making his career—even one entitled *The One*. "The important thing is that I continue to make good movies and tell good stories. What my career turns out to be is a direct result of the quality of my work. If I do my best in that area, then a career will certainly follow."

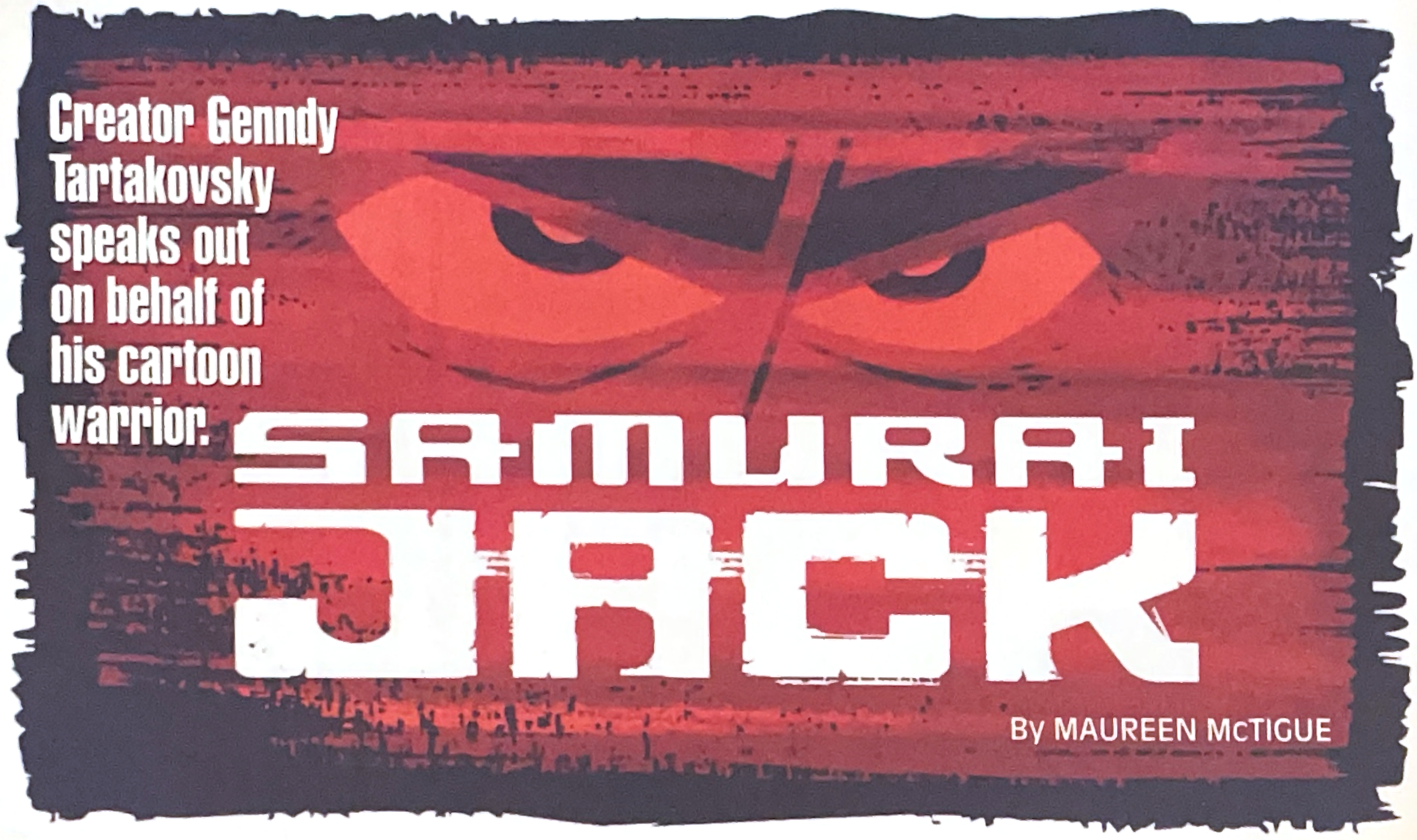
With producing, acting and, to a degree, writing already among his skills, one can't help but wonder if directing might not be in Li's future. "Directing? No. I don't think I would be very good at it. I will continue to produce and act. I would like to create stories that are about more than just good fighting. I would like to create stories that have messages and characters and will educate audiences as well as entertain them."

He reverts to his mask of Buddhist simplicity once again when asked if he's comfortable with the mantle of stardom and celebrity. "Nothing good. Nothing bad. It happens. The audience makes things happen, not the studios."

Li excuses himself and reports to the cavernous power station. After a quick conversation with his martial arts coordinator, he climbs to the top of an all-metal catwalk. He does some warm-up exercises and a few practice kicks. Across the catwalk, a stuntman awaits. The smile slowly fades from Li's face and is replaced by a serious scowl. The director calls for action.

It's time for Jet Li to go to work. ★

Design & Layout: Heiner Feil



Following the success of *Dexter's Laboratory*—the animated adventures of a boy genius, his pet monkey and his ever-present, always-persistent sister—creator Genndy Tartakovsky has brought a new hero to the Cartoon Network. Tartakovsky's latest TV series chronicles one warrior's noble quest to return to his own time in order to save a future that has gone horribly awry. He's *Samurai Jack*.

Tartakovsky points out that *Samurai Jack* is "very unique. I'm going to keep stressing how different it is, because the reason I made it is so there would be an action show out there that *I* would want to see as an audience member. *Samurai Jack* has more action than you've *ever* seen in a cartoon, and it has simple stories so we have time to do the action—the plots are usually very simplistic. It's a stylized show with a very individual look. We make the environment a character, because Jack travels to the future and must find his way back, so the future is a huge element of the show.

"You can really feel the mood," he continues. "It's a very moody show—and not moody like brooding or dark, but *Samurai Jack* does have different types of moods: fantasy, sad, happy, drama. The color, the music and everything, they all work together for one goal, and that is to make an entertaining show—but one with feeling."

Compared to his popular *Dexter's Laboratory*, Tartakovsky believes *Samurai Jack* is "very different, but the sensibilities are similar. Some of the humor comes from the same place; it's still character-oriented and the humor is a little quirky. It's not the normal action show you would see on Fox or the WB. It's its own thing."

Silent Samurai

The story of *Samurai Jack* begins long ago, with the rise to power of the evil, mad and rather nasty wizard Aku. Heroic Samurai Jack battles the warlock to protect his world, but is unexpectedly flung far into the future, where Aku is now the leader and the world reflects his particularly nefarious way of life.

"We created the future so we could go *anywhere* we wanted to, so we wouldn't be limited at all," the animator explains. "If we want a city in the clouds, we can have a city in the clouds. If we want a Moroccan village, we can have one. We aren't limited at all, except by our imaginations."

And those imaginations certainly aren't limited either. In fact, Tartakovsky and his team keep reaching for more. "I want to do stylized action like *Dragonball* or *anime*," he comments, "when you really do some cutting around. But I also really want to challenge and take up more choreographed fighting, so that Jack can run into a scene and chop one guy, then turn around and chop another guy and another and yet another all in *one* scene. Some of the samurai action is quick, like fencing, but other things are very deliberate, very choreographed, because I wanted to make it feel different from other cartoons where you just have slash, slash, slash, cut and there's a head flying. We do a little of that, but we also do the choreographed fighting. When you watch the first episode and the movie [the 90-minute premiere], you'll really see a good balance."

The series' main character, the timelost Jack, is a man of few words with a large task ahead of him. "He's the vehicle for the whole thing," Tartakovsky notes. "One thing we try to do is make it so the audience knows *only* what Jack knows. They're never privy to what's going to happen before Jack is. As Jack discovers something, they discover it. And Jack leads them through."

Samurai Jack was inspired by classic material. "I am a big fan of John Woo and Akira Kurosawa and all the films like *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*—before they became mainstream. *G-Force* was one of my favorite TV shows growing up. Those sorts of shows had everything I

"We aren't limited at all, except by our imaginations."

All Samurai Jack Images: Copyright 2001 Cartoon Network

wanted: great characters, amazing action and cool [attitude]. There was something fun about them. Some episodes were definitely dark, but others were just about fighting a giant robot. That was a big inspiration to me. It's just what I wanted to make: A show that doesn't talk down to kids. It's there, it's not stupid and it doesn't over-explain everything.

"I also love [Hayao] Miyazaki, and the thing about Miyazaki is that he lets you discover the world his characters are in, like if you're in Laputa [*Laputa: Castle in the Sky*], you really go on this journey, and I love the way I feel when I watch that. I wanted to create something similar with this idea—of letting you discover things along with the character."

Vital to the code of the samurai is one principle in particular: honor. This is a

"It's a stylized show," says the animator. "We make the environment a character."

Tartakovsky expanded Jack's range of expressions to make his man of few words a more accessible character.

credo Tartakovsky has not overlooked. "Jack's trying to save the future by getting back to the past. That's the thing about him: He'll always help someone else before he helps himself. That's the code of the samurai, that's the honor."

The characters without honor, the villains, are equally important to Tartakovsky. "I think you *always* want to be bad, but you never can be because, you know, it's *wrong*," he laughs. "So with animation, when you're doing a villain, you can really let loose and be more free and daring, because this is the evil side of you that can come out without any repercussions. Because you never get to express that, you can just let loose. I think Aku is going to be just as appealing as Mandark [of *Dexter's Laboratory*]. Aku's very funny and quirky, a little more original. He's mysterious in his weirdness. And he runs the world, so it's very twisted."

Warrior Words

Tartakovsky knew what was necessary to bring his time-traveling hero to life. "I knew I wanted to have more facial expressions," he asserts. "The thing about most action shows is that the characters' expressions are very limited because they're more realistically designed—it's a happy-sad-mad kind of thing. I wanted to have as much range of expression as Dexter or Bugs Bunny, so I gave Jack really big eyes and a cartoony design. There are many expressions with him, and I think that's what makes him more accessible. He opens up to you, and you go into his soul and feel better about him as a character, not just as a guy with a sword."

With the look determined, Tartakovsky now needed a voice for his man of few words. "We auditioned about 100 actors for Jack. I was looking for a great presence, not necessarily loud, and then I heard Phil's voice and it was great," he says of *Futurama*'s Phil LaMarr (SCI-FI TV #10). "He has so much presence to him, and it turned out he has great timing and is a really funny guy. We get along well. It was the great presence in Phil's voice that drew me to him, because Jack doesn't talk much, but when he *does* talk, he really has to be there, so Phil was the perfect choice." Veteran actor Mako—who recently played Admiral Yamamoto in *Pearl Harbor* and provides narration for *Dexter's Laboratory*—speaks for Aku.

The animated near-future of *Samurai Jack* holds some interesting interaction, including "his first adventure where he meets a woman warrior. There's a very tragic end that I won't give away," Tartakovsky hints. "Another of

"*Samurai Jack* has more action than you've *ever* seen in a cartoon."

my favorite episodes is coming up, where Jack fights these five robot assassins. But the story is told backward, through flashbacks. Jack gets to this village and it's destroyed, and by the clues he sees, he pictures what happened. The second half of the episode is Jack fighting these robots, and he has to get a robot arm to help him. That story is really good."

Robot assassins and arms? If you think Tartakovsky likes science fiction, you would be right. "I grew up on *Star Wars*, *Blade Runner*, *Star Trek* and all that stuff, but the thing about Jack is that once he gets into the future, he *stays* in the future. There is no time travel after that. It's just him traveling around this new world that he must now deal with."

Animated Actions

The success of his earlier creation *Dexter's Laboratory* (which he discussed in STARLOG #246) opened the animation door for Tartakovsky. "It gave me freedom, and it built up a trust between the Cartoon Network people and myself. We have a great relationship; there's a lot of trust going both ways. When they hire me and the crew to do a cartoon, they know pretty much what they're going to get—there are not too many surprises. They know we're going to try different things, and they know we're not going to repeat ourselves and we will keep pushing and pushing."

The new 13-episode season of *Dexter's Laboratory* is "pretty much wrapped up, we're just in post. On the new *Dexters*, I served in a supervisory, overseeing role. I wasn't as hands-on as I was in the first season." But the animator couldn't be happier with the work that the *Dexter* team has been doing. "The shows are really funny, and the look is a little more stylized. *Dexter* still holds up very well."

Not one to allow himself much free time, Tartakovsky has also worked with fellow animator/creator Craig McCracken on *The Powerpuff Girls*. "Well, we're done with the series," he remarks. "But I'm doing the animation direction on the movie [due out in summer 2002]. Craig and his team storyboarded the movie, and I get the storyboards and put all the timing in. That's it."

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"I think people feel that the shows aren't heavy-handed. There are no morals, no values in them or anything—they're just fun! People respect and enjoy that. And they're easy. You sit down, watch, they're fun. You laugh, you get entertained, you get moved, hopefully, and that's it. And that's saying something for a cartoon, because much of the time you watch a cartoon, you turn it off and forget about it in the next two minutes—like most movies these days.

"I want to feel like I did when I watched *G-Force*," he says, "I sat down, watched it, put on my cape and took my makeshift throwing bird and ran around the house because I was inspired and moved. It was cool. To me, that's what sincere is, and I have the freedom to do that type of thing. It makes it interesting."

Genndy Tartakovsky knows *Samurai Jack* has something for everybody, and he wants everyone to join in the fun. "It's very different, and the adventures are also different from episode to episode. So if, for some reason, you don't like one, don't worry," he laughs. "The next one's going to be completely different." ★

Inspired by John Woo, Akira Kurosawa and the TV series *G-Force*, Tartakovsky yearned to create a sincere show that doesn't talk down to kids.

The success of *Dexter's Laboratory* gave Tartakovsky the freedom to try different things with the ambitious *Samurai Jack*.

Dexter Art: Copyright 2001 Cartoon Network

Design & Layout: Heiner Feil

"Samurai Jack has more action than you've *ever* seen in a cartoon."

my favorite episodes is coming up, where Jack fights these five robot assassins. But the story is told backward, through flashbacks. Jack gets to this village and it's destroyed, and by the clues he sees, he pictures what happened. The second half of the episode is Jack fighting these robots, and he has to get a robot arm to help him. That story is really good."

Robot assassins and arms? If you think Tartakovsky likes science fiction, you would be right. "I grew up on *Star Wars*, *Blade Runner*, *Star Trek* and all that stuff, but the thing about Jack is that once he gets into the future, he *stays* in the future. There is no time travel after that. It's just him traveling around this new world that he must now deal with."

Animated Actions

The success of his earlier creation *Dexter's Laboratory* (which he discussed in STARLOG #246) opened the animation door for Tartakovsky. "It gave me freedom, and it built up a trust between the Cartoon Network people and myself. We have a great relationship; there's a lot of trust going both ways. When they hire me and the crew to do a cartoon, they know pretty much what they're going to get—there are not too many surprises. They know we're going to try different things, and they know we're not going to repeat ourselves and we will keep pushing and pushing."

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Dexter Art: Copyright 2001 Cartoon Network

Design & Layout: Heiner Fell

Returning *ANGEL*

Excited by a second season, Jes

By IAN SPELLING

An episode of *Dark Angel* ends and the show's faithful fans flock instantly to the Internet to debate that particular hour's merits. Elsewhere, Jessica Alba steps out on the town, where she'll probably pass a magazine with a picture of herself on the cover or encounter another amorous admirer. Such is the nature of stardom in the wake of *Dark Angel*.

"I think it's great," Alba enthuses. "People are watching. What more could you ask for? What if *nobody* was saying anything? Then we wouldn't have been picked up for this season. People who meet me go, 'Oh my God, that's the Dark Angel!' or 'Oh shit, you were on the cover of my *Maxim*!' I get that from teenage boys. Then I get sweet ladies coming up and saying, 'My daughter and I watch your show, and we love that your character kicks ass. We just think it's great. We never miss a show.' In the line at Starbucks, I'll get a mom who will come up to me and tell me that. So I get different reactions, and that's great, because it means we go wider than what Fox *thinks* our demographics are."

Dark Angel debuted last year to incredible hype, generally positive reviews and a sizable audience—but the show, co-executive produced by James Cameron and Charles H. ("Chic") Eglee, cost so much to make that merely good ratings weren't enough to prompt a no-brainer renewal from Fox. The network considered the facts, however: a hot, young female star, the marquee value of Hollywood's "King of the World," respectable ratings, the buzz that was generated by Alba's engagement to co-star Michael Weatherly this past spring, as well as *Dark Angel*'s popularity with the all-important, advertiser-friendly 18-34-year-old crowd. So in the end, Fox granted the series a second season pickup.

"Fortunately, I was up in Vancouver, so I really *wasn't* exposed to the hype," says Alba (previously profiled in STARLOG #281). "I knew that the show would have a degree of hype because of Jim and

Stardom doesn't bother Jessica Alba. "I think it's great," she enthuses. "What if *nobody* was saying anything?"

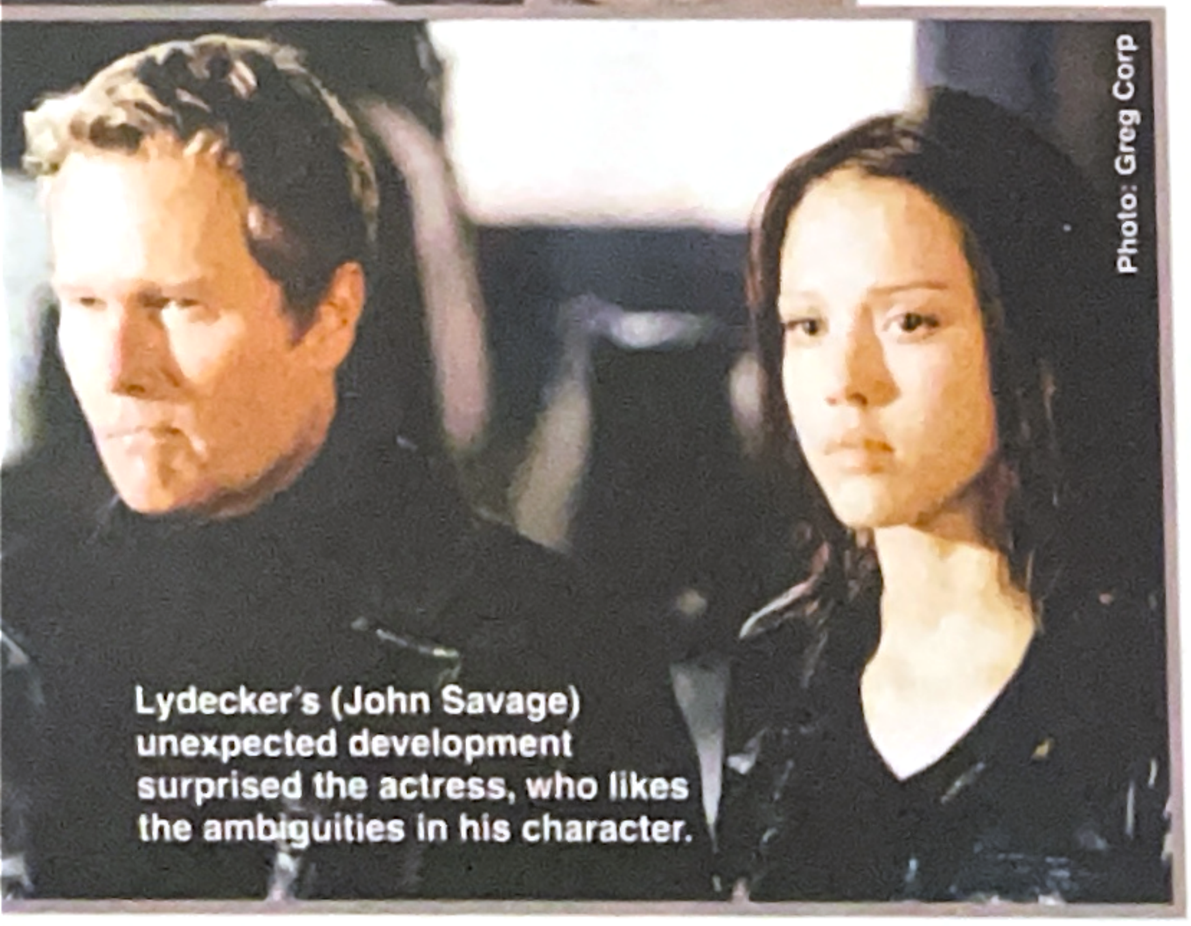
sica Alba delights in the darkness.

Riding into a second season, Alba will be exploring the more human side of Max on *Dark Angel* this year.

All Photos: Copyright 2001 Fox Broadcasting Company

Alba loves working with co-star Michael Weatherly both on and off-screen. The two are now engaged.

Photo: Greg Corp



Lydecker's (John Savage) unexpected development surprised the actress, who likes the ambiguities in his character.

Photo: Greg Corp

the fact that his name was attached to it, and it was the first thing he had done since *Titanic*. I thought that was a good thing, because at least I knew people would watch it. Whether they *liked* it or not, you never know with any product what people will buy. You just hope for the best, and that's what we did. I think people like the kicking-ass stuff. They like the action. They like the SF elements, because the show is so close to real life and to people's imaginations. The year 2020 isn't that far off, and people like to think, 'What if the world, what if the economy, *did* go to shit, then what would we do? What would the world be like? Is this accurate?' And *Dark Angel* is pretty accurate. People almost enjoy that in a weird way, because it's so close to home. They also like the Manticore stuff, the genetic engineering."

Human Days

For those not up on the *Dark Angel* Universe, a bit of background: Max Guevara (Alba) is an X-5, a prototype superhuman conceived, educated and trained by the government at a facility called Manticore. As a child, Max escaped from Manticore with a group of similar beings, and has been on the run ever since, hiding in plain sight as a messenger in Seattle, all the while searching for her "brothers" and "sisters." Eventually, she hooked up with cyberjournalist and freedom fighter Logan Cale (Weatherly), and reluctantly became his operative when he ended up in a wheelchair. Most of season one followed Max as she grew closer to Cale, learned to trust, dealt with assorted X-5s and fought the good fight.

The year ended with "...And Jesus Brought a Casserole," in which Max and her fellow X-5s take the war directly to Manticore. Max nearly dies, but is saved by Zack (William Gregory Lee), who kills himself so that Madame X/Dr. Elizabeth Renfro (Nana Visitor) can transplant his heart into Max. Lydecker (John Savage), in a shocking twist, helps the X-5s, and reveals to Max that his wife inspired her; in other words, his wife's DNA lives on in Max. By the time the credits roll, Madame X is looking down at Max, happy to have her prodigal daughter back home, while X-7 clones of Max and other X-5s prowl about, Lydecker contemplates the notion that he is now prey for Madame X and Cale sits, alone, on the space needle, essentially repeating Max's closing speech from the show's pilot.

Season two picks up (in the show's new Friday, 8 p.m. time slot) with "Designate This," as a re-indoctrinated Max wreaks havoc at Manticore. Amidst all the explosions, Max releases a number of beings that can only be described as failed experiments, which launches an *X-Men*-esque mutant-racism arc that will receive major play throughout the year. Chief among the mutants is Joshua (Kevin Durand, who has appeared in *Stargate SG-1* and *Andromeda*), a half-human/half-dog who will emerge as Max's ally.

"Max is more human," Alba remarks of her character's second season transition. "I definitely thought of her as more robotic, cold and unfeeling [in the beginning], and now she's more human than anything. She struggles with that. I want to see how she's going to be as an adult, how she's going to get over this early-20s thing and try to figure stuff out. This whole year, I think, will be about her trying to find the guy who made Manticore. She destroys Manticore this season, and now she wants to go search out the guy who made it. *Why* did he make it? Why did he do that to them? And we'll see how she deals with all that."

As always, *Dark Angel* will explore Max's relationship with Cale. This season, watch for Max to suffer from a virus that prevents her from even touching Cale, and also look for potential love interests: Max will be tempted by her breeding partner, Alec (Jensen Ackles, who played Ben in the episode "Pollo Loco"), while a woman named Asha (Ashley Scott, Gigolo Jane from *A.I.*) will turn Cale's head.

The possibility of pairing up Max with another character doesn't ring true to Alba. "They're trying to, but I don't know if it will work," Alba questions. "For my character, I don't think it would work at all. She's not like that. She doesn't really care enough about people and early-20s drama. She's beyond that. She's trying to survive. She has lived too much of a life to deal with that stuff. So when she meets Logan and has a special

connection, I think she takes that to heart. But they're definitely throwing in some storylines. They'll probably put me in heat again."

Angel Ways

Dark Angel will also devote some time to the gang at the Jampony and, of course, to Lydecker. "I'm very pleased with the way they've developed the relationship with Logan," Alba comments. "Unfortunately, they throw too much exposition at Michael. They always give it to him and he hates it, but he's such a good actor that he actually does something with it. So they just keep giving it to him instead of the other characters. He's so good to work with. He's always 100 percent there for me emotionally, and he never checks out. That's just great, to have that, especially with regulars. Many times, you get so comfortable with everyone that you just forget, you zone out, but Michael always has his eye on the prize. He's always thinking of the show's climax and 'What is this episode about?' and 'What's the point of it?' and 'How can we make it better?' I love working with him because he's so on the ball with that.

"With John, it's an experience to work with him," she continues. "He's such a pro, and he has been doing this forever. John definitely has his own method and does his own thing. The way they've developed Lydecker is totally unlike what you would expect based on what you saw at the series' beginning, and I dig it. Lydecker's not really a bad guy, but he's not really a good guy, either. I think that's more interesting than the quintessential bad guy. And Lydecker doesn't have a [foreign] accent, which is good. As far as the other characters, it's a learning curve. Hopefully, their characters will have some good storylines. All in all, as long as we're not doing things that are just so off-base and idiotic that the audience is like, 'What? This isn't *Melrose Place*. This is *Dark Angel*,' and as long as we stay true to our audience and work really hard, hopefully we'll stay on the air."

Guiding the behind-the-scenes ship these days are Eglee and René Echevarria, the latter late of both *Deep Space Nine* and *Now and Again*, with an assist from Cameron. Alba insists that Cameron is more involved than viewers might assume. "Jim is on a boat somewhere now, but, you know, he was in Russia last year and still managed to be very much a part of the show," the actress argues. "He comes back from his trips and he'll spend eight to 10 hours in the editing room, editing together fight scenes and shows. He also puts together six storylines with Chic and René, and then they go at it and we film it. That takes a long time. So by the time he comes back, he's like, 'OK, where are we in the progression of the show? How is it going?'

"He gets a daily e-mail about the things that are happening. He knows all about the dog guy, the cat woman and all the crazy creatures we have these days. He drew up the dog guy, and I think he made them a sketch of some lizard guy. Jim likes that stuff. He's very involved. Just because he's not here, doesn't mean he's *not* involved. Technology is his best friend. He's totally into it. And Chic and René make a great team."

Year two of *Dark Angel* promises to be a pivotal one for the series. The actress is aware of this, and looks forward to the task ahead. "It's still going to have all the action and everything it had last year," Jessica Alba promises. "I appreciate the SF element. It's challenging to my mind and, I think, to other people's. It's just off-base enough that we don't get into the trivial bullshit most shows get caught up in. We don't have an opportunity to do that, because with *Dark Angel*, we're thinking about these genetically engineered diseases that can destroy a race vs. whether a character can or can't get their favorite pair of jeans at whatever store. It can go sideways fast, but it doesn't on this show."

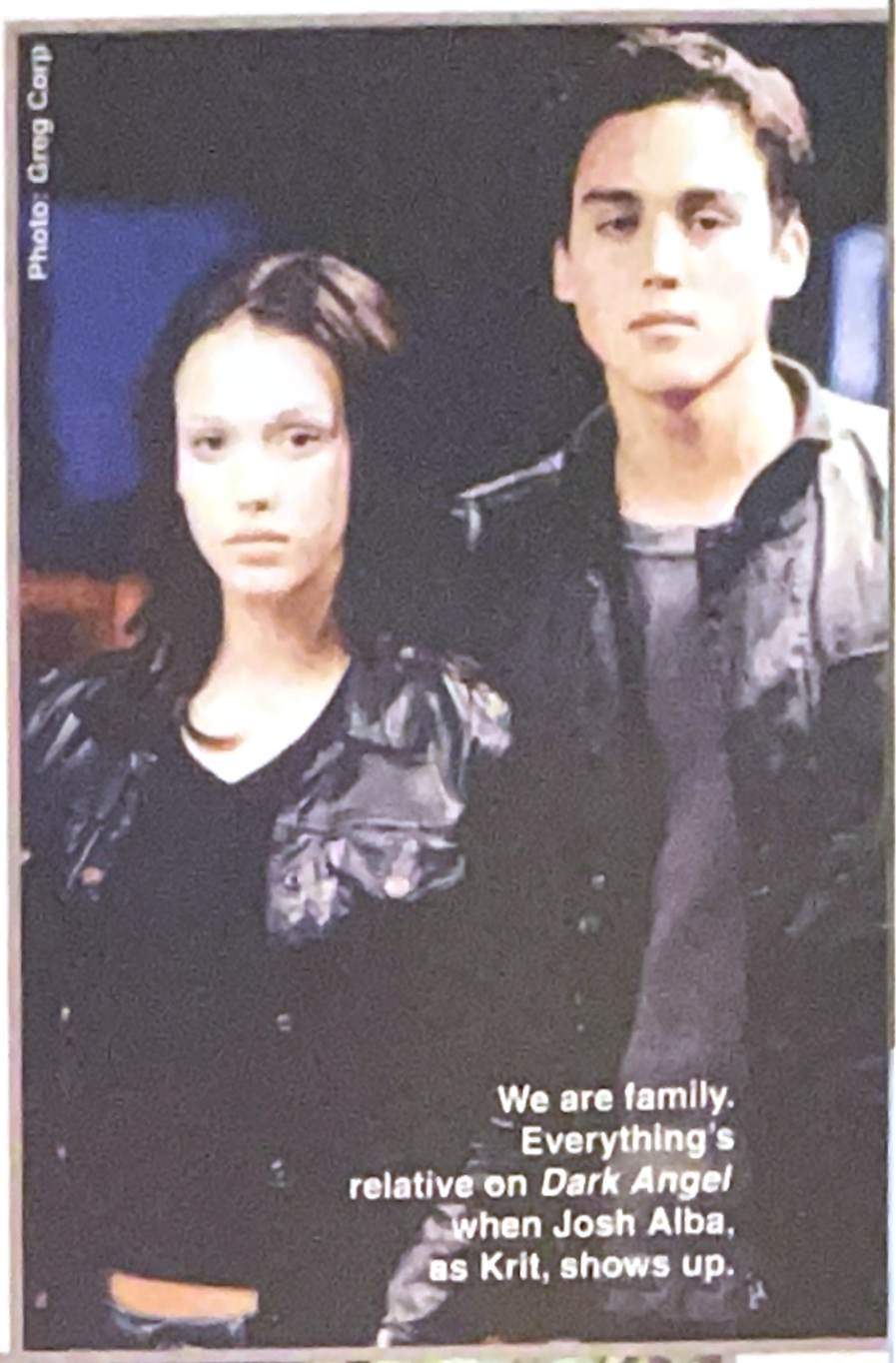
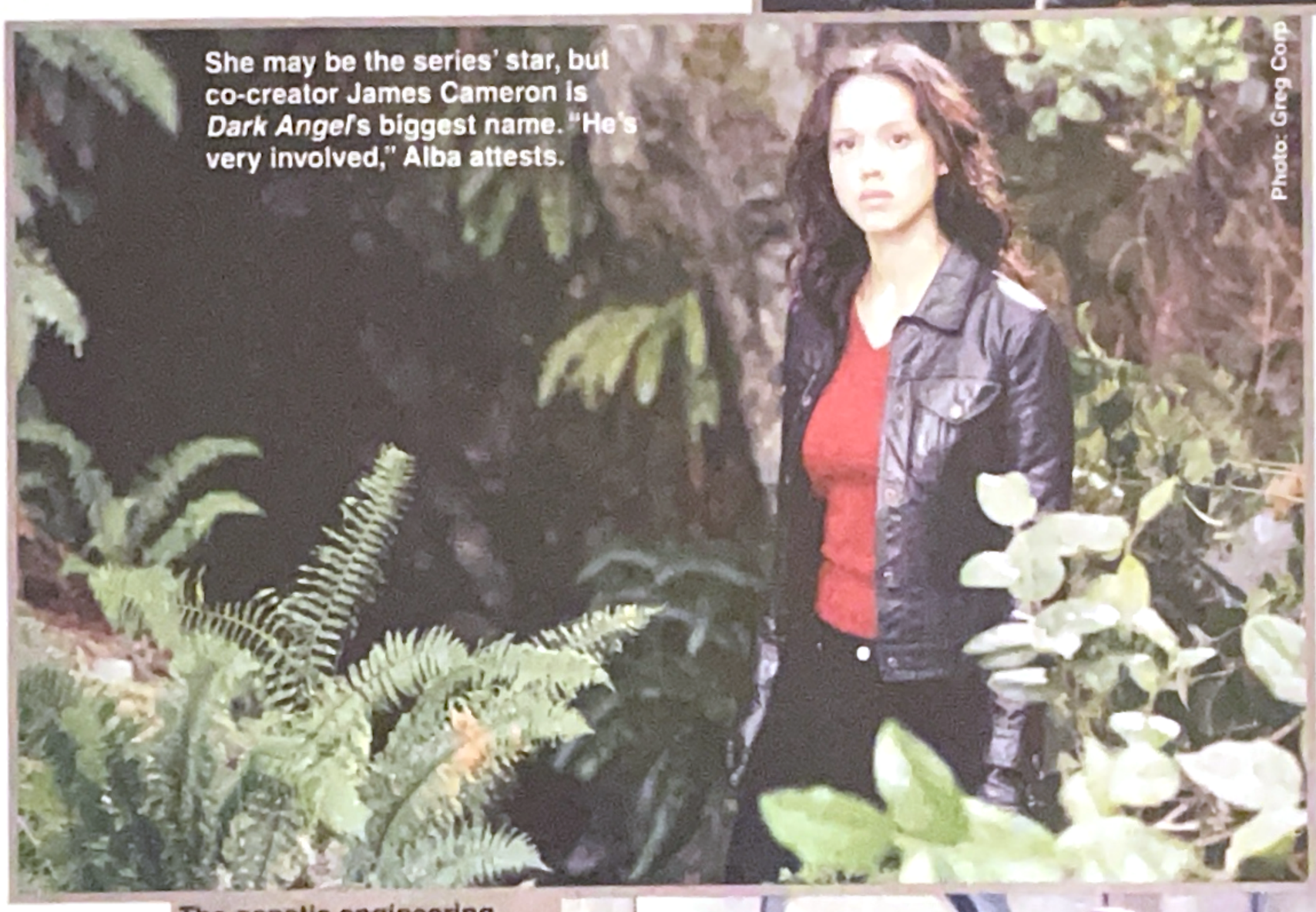


Photo: Greg Corp

We are family. Everything's relative on *Dark Angel* when Josh Alba, as Krit, shows up.

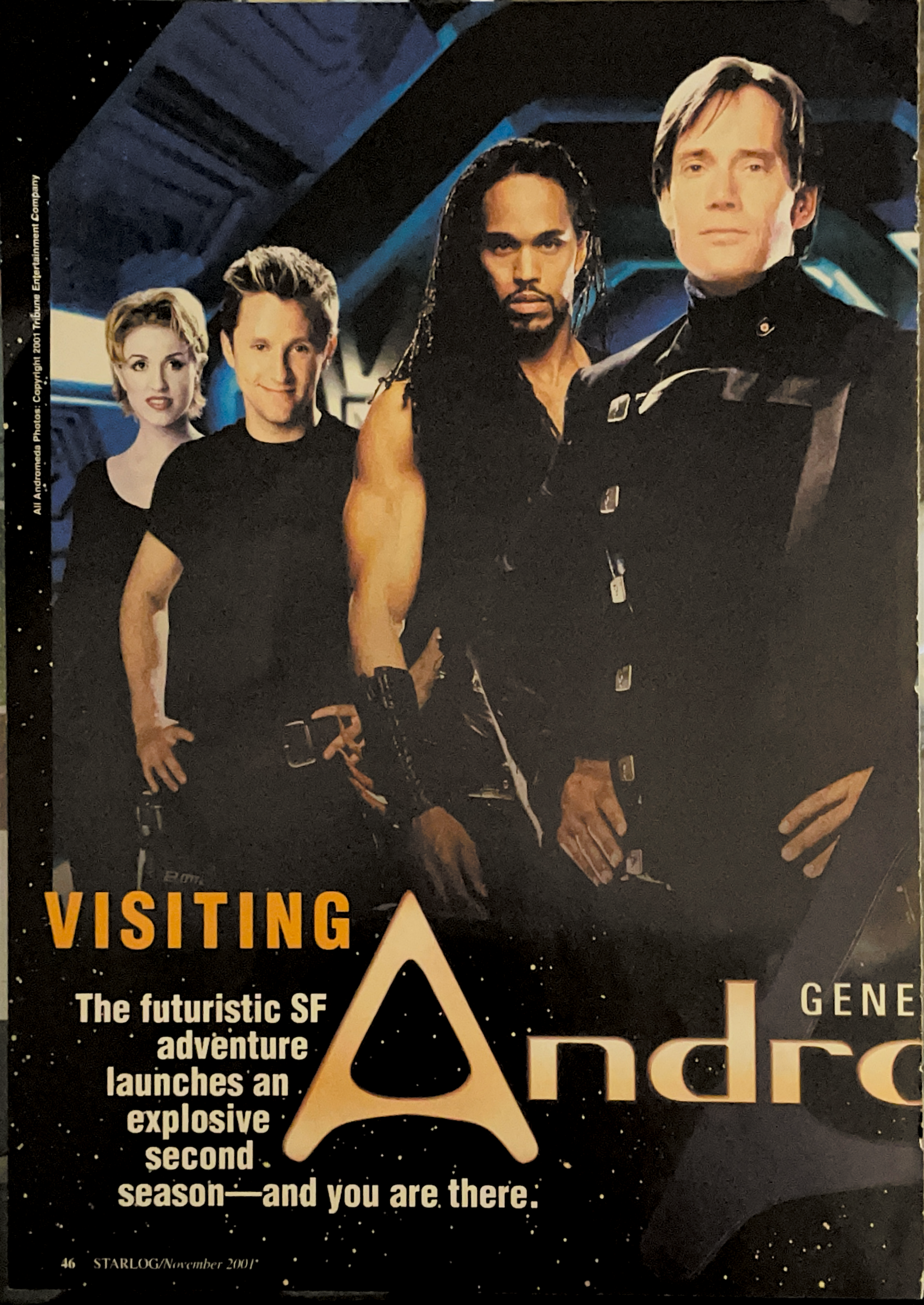


She may be the series' star, but co-creator James Cameron is *Dark Angel*'s biggest name. "He's very involved," Alba attests.

Photo: Greg Corp

The genetic engineering storyline is altered this season when Max destroys Manticore and starts looking for the man who made it.

Design & Layout: Heiner Feil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VISITING
The futuristic SF adventure launches an explosive second season—and you are there.
GENE
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RODDENBERRY'S *Andromeda*™

By JOE NAZZARO

There's a new season of adventure for the heroes of *Andromeda*: Laura Bertram, Gordon Michael Woolvett, Keith Hamilton Cobb, Kevin Sorbo, Lisa Ryder, Lexa Doig and Brent Stait.

A dimly lit cave is suddenly rocked by a series of powerful explosions. Amidst the smoke and chaos, a pair of gun-wielding troopers emerges. The first is Dylan Hunt, last captain of the System's Commonwealth; his companion, Tyr Anasazi, is a no-nonsense Nietzschean warrior. They're attempting to knock out the automated defense units of the former High Guard station, Acheron. But it's not going to be easy. As round after round of gunfire lights up the dark cave, it quickly becomes obvious that they've got a real fight on their hands.

"And...cut!" announces director Allan Kroeker. It's day four on "Una Salus Victus," the latest episode of Gene Roddenberry's *Andromeda*. Now well into production in Vancouver on its second season, the top-rated syndicated SF series looks to be bigger, better and—if this morning's explosions are any indication—*louder* than the previous season.

As the show's FX team begin resetting their pyrotechnics for another take, cast members Kevin Sorbo and Keith Hamilton Cobb take a moment to relax. "That was even better than I had imagined," Kroeker tells them. "It's almost a Western, isn't it?"

Sorbo comes over to say hello, and then heads back to his trailer to make a few quick phone calls. Cobb disappears to a quiet corner of the set for a bit of solitude, presumably to allow his ears a chance to stop ringing.

Kroeker talks over the scene with director of photography Gordon Verheul. Both are happy with what they've seen so far. "You can get a better view from over here," the director says to his visitor from STARLOG, beckoning to a chair next to the monitor. "This is the B camera," he explains. "We're over-cranking the camera to 60 frames, so all these explosions will look quite lush."

This is Kroeker's third episode of *Andromeda* to date, having helmed the show's opener "Under the Night" and "Music of a Distant Drum" last season. Ironically, the director, whose résumé includes several dozen SF credits, including the *Deep Space Nine* and *Voyager* finales, insists he's *not* really an aficionado of the genre.

"I can't remember how I ended up in science fiction," he claims. "Firstly, I've *never* been a fan of it. The only SF movies I've seen are *ALIEN*, *2001: A Space Odyssey*, *Blade Runner* and the best *Star Trek* movie ever made, *Galaxy Quest*. I liked that one very much. Sometimes actors, directors, even cameramen can get typecast: 'Oh no, he can *only* do sci-fi. We can't put him on a location show!' "

Before returning to the *Andromeda* Universe, Kroeker had his hands full wrapping up "Endgame," the lavish two-hour finale to *Voyager*. "That was a tough

show," he recalls. "The challenge was actually all the motion-control shots that we did with Kate Mulgrew. That was very tricky to do, and we did them quite efficiently, but then we tried to make it more difficult for ourselves by having Kate not only talk to herself in a split frame, but having both Janeways moving and crossing each other.

"That was more pleasant than shooting the *DS9* final episode ["What You Leave Behind"], from a production standpoint. I love many of the people on *DS9*, but cast-wise, it was tough. The *Voyager* cast was very easy to work with, but I was hoping to avoid the emotion of it. Originally, they had asked me to do episode 24, and I said, 'OK, I don't have to deal with all that emotional stuff at the end of a series,' but then they ended up calling me anyway."

Next up for Kroeker is an episode of *Enterprise* (see page 42), but he's more than happy to return for future episodes of *Andromeda*. "The one big difference here is, when Gordie says, 'Two minutes!' everybody shows up in two minutes, so it's a very efficient crew. It's a great unit, lovely people, cast and crew-wise."

Space Hunt

Sorbo returns to the set, ready to talk about the show's new season. The former *Hercules* actor's unflagging enthusiasm for *Andromeda* quickly becomes apparent, as he provides a rundown of the episode now being shot. "Tyr and I have gone down to a planet that used to house the High Guard station, Acheron," he relates, "which during the heyday of the Commonwealth was like the Pearl Harbor of the fleet. The Nietzscheans have now taken it over, and these are the Drago-Kazov, so there are plenty of bad guys there. All the Nietzscheans in this time frame are pretty bad guys, but even the other Nietzschean prides don't like the Drago-Kazov. We're down there as saboteurs; we're going to set a bunch of explosives and blow the place to kingdom come.

"In the scene we're doing now, I have a map of the entire place, because it has been part of my High Guard thing forever, so I have a map of the corridors, caverns and chambers and how to get around the place. They have defense systems put up everywhere, and we've got to take them out, so that's what we're doing today. It's a great show for us. We did a day on location, rappelling, flying around and doing fight scenes. Keith and I had fun. It has been a really good relationship between our two characters, because they're very adversarial, but there's a grudging mutual respect between them."

According to Sorbo, the episodes currently in production have a much more mature theme to them, with plenty of opportunity for the characters to develop and change. "We're working on episode seven right now, and I still find little places where Dylan can exhibit a different character trait that *wasn't* shown before, which makes it fun. I plan on making him just a little more edgy this year, and they're sort of writing me that way. It's there in the scripts, and even though they don't write, 'Dylan is more edgy,' the way I read the dialogue is showing a little more psychotic behavior. We're making him a little more unpredictable, more like a combination of Bruce Willis in his action films and some Harrison Ford vulnerability—things I've always liked in action guys. These are traits I want to incorporate into this character."

The actor's love for *Andromeda* is not unconditional, however. He peruses each script carefully, providing the writers with his input, and isn't afraid to be outspoken when he thinks improvements need to be made. "I'll be honest," he confesses, "there are a few things I want to change in the show. I definitely want it to be more watchable for a wider range of audience. We've got to make it more action-oriented, but I want the shows to be *smart*. I don't want to dummy them down. I don't want to make them the comic book that *Hercules* was, as much fun as that was. It's time to try something different.

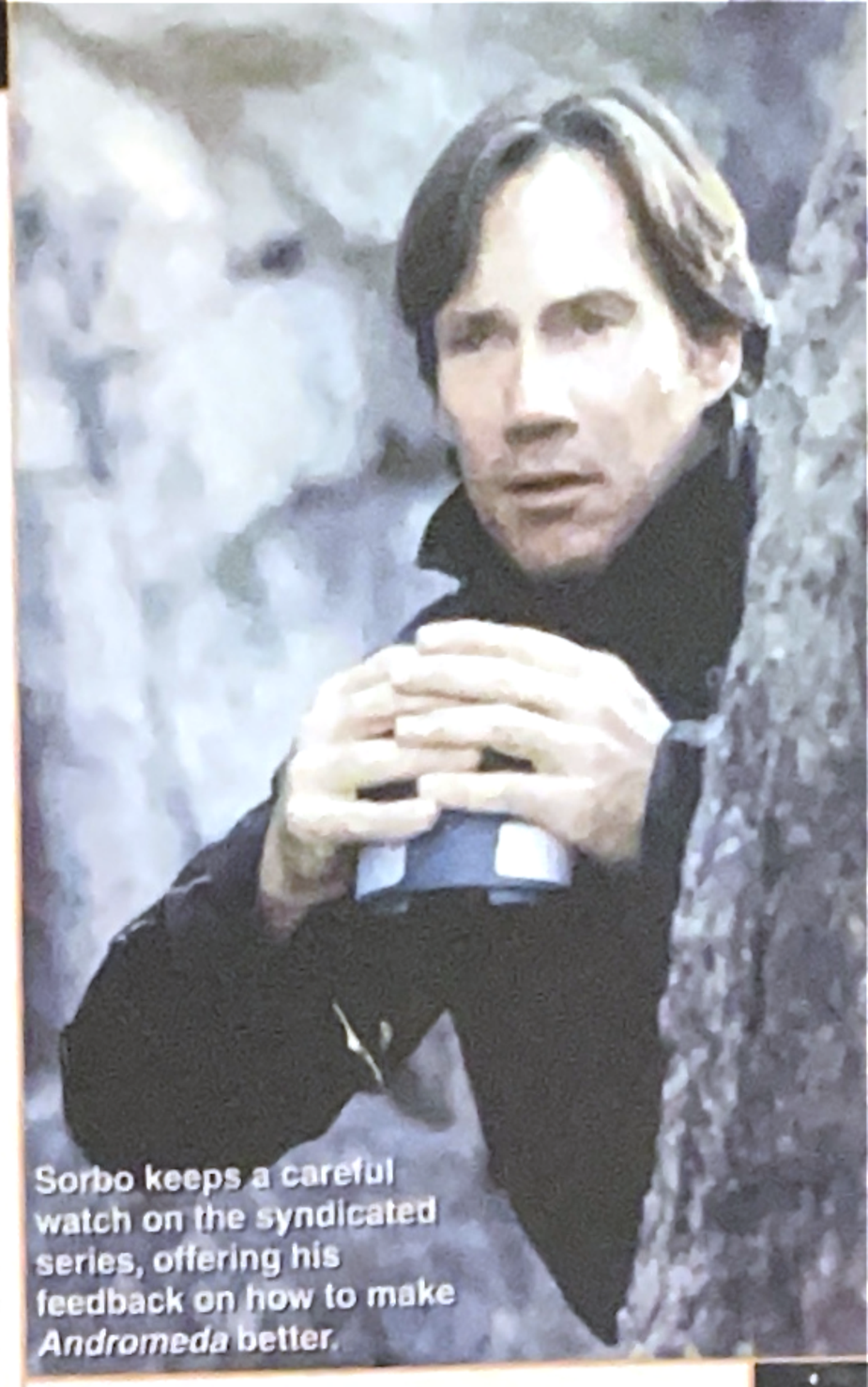
"I'm on a big campaign to change our theme song. I don't like it. I've been an advocate against it since it came out. Our ending theme song is very good—it's sweeping, it's nice, but to me, our opening theme song is just a bunch of noise. They know it, and they're not going to like me telling you this, but I'm telling you because I *don't care* if it's out there. I would like to take an honest poll [on the subject], but how do you take an honest poll?"

The conversation is interrupted by one of the assistant directors, who asks Sorbo if he wants to be in the next set-up. When informed that only a bit of his shoulder will actually be seen, the actor politely demurs. "That was something I used to jump at in *Hercules*," he says with a smile. "I was in everything before I realized that you don't have to be in *every* shot. It's just silly.

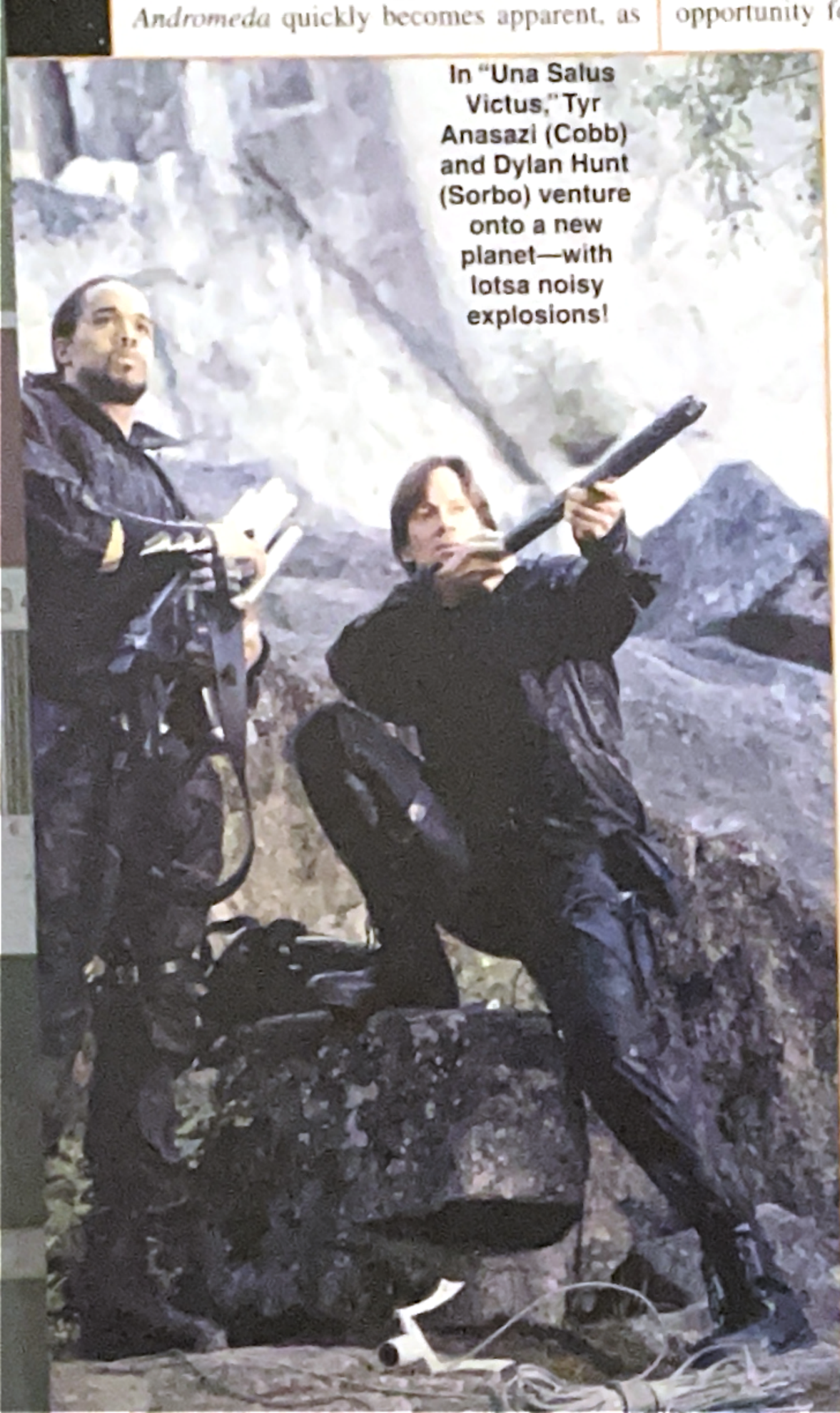
"I talked to Arnold Schwarzenegger years ago, and he asked me how many of my own stunts I did. I said I did most of them, and he said, 'That's crazy!' When there is an explosion 30 feet away, why do I have to be there? My ego is not as big as it used to be. I'm secure with who I am, and if I'm a wimp sometimes, so be it!"

Tyr Change

Sorbo isn't the only cast member who has been giving a great deal of thought to his character's role in the series. As the show's resident Nietzschean quality control engineer, Cobb has much to say about *Andromeda*'s genetically enhanced warrior race. "That's an interesting phrase," he chuckles, " 'Nietzschean quality control



Sorbo keeps a careful watch on the syndicated series, offering his feedback on how to make *Andromeda* better.



In "Una Salus Victus," Tyr Anasazi (Cobb) and Dylan Hunt (Sorbo) venture onto a new planet—with lotsa noisy explosions!